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LORD BYRON

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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Lord Byron at Cambridge

From a Drawing in the possession of Mrs Webb Newstead Abbey

by Gilchrist of Cambridge

LORD BYRON

A BIOGRAPHY

WITH A CRITICAL ESSAY ON

HIS PLACE IN LITERATURE

By KARL ELZE

TRANSLATED WITH THE AUTHOR'S SANCTION, AND EDITED WITH NOTES

With Portrait and Facsimile

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1872

The right of translation is reserved

210. f. 151.

TO

WILLIAM NAPIER

THIS TRANSLATION

UNDERTAKEN AT HIS SUGGESTION

IS

Affectionately Dedicated

BY THE

TRANSLATOR

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

PROFESSOR ELZE enjoys the reputation in Germany of possessing a deep and extensive acquaintance with the language and literature of England. He began his literary career, we believe, by the publication of a volume of 'Selections from the best English Poets.' His 'Reminiscences of a Tour through England and Scotland' communicated to Germany the results of his more personal observations. These were succeeded by a 'Life of Sir Walter Scott,' in 2 vols. 8vo., for whom he entertains the most sincere respect, and of whose genius he forms a still higher estimate than is generally held by the critics of Germany. Some of the results of his profound and original studies in Shakespeare and his contemporaries he published in a 'Critical Edition of Hamlet;' and the manner in which his knowledge and labours are regarded in Germany is evinced by the fact, that he has been appointed the editor of the 'Year-book of the German Shakespeare-Society,'—a publication devoted to the study of our great poet—the sixth volume of which has recently been published. In 1870 appeared his 'Life of Lord Byron.' In no country of Europe, not even in England, had Byron's poems been more widely read or more enthusiastically

admired than in Germany. Goethe tells us,[1] that the youth of both sexes had, in the ardour of their love for his poetry, almost forgotten their own nationality. But notwithstanding the interest thus felt for the creations of his genius, no substantive Life of Byron had, as far as we are aware, appeared in Germany, with the exception of Willkomm's Biography, which we know only from the contemptuous mention made of it by Treitschke in his able essay[2] on 'Byron and Radicalism.' It seems, to judge from the terms in which it is there spoken of, to resemble those fantastic and spasmodic attempts at a biography of Byron which appeared in France shortly after and, indeed, even before, his death. Professor Elze's volume is of a totally different character. He professes, indeed, to have no access to new or original documents; he makes no claim, therefore, to the interest attaching itself to a biography which enriches our previous knowledge with information derived from private and hitherto unused papers, journals, or letters. The materials from which he has constructed his 'Life' are open to all enquirers. Its merits as a narrative depend on the skilful and artistic use which he has made of these materials, and, as a work of criticism, on the truth and soundness of the critical judgments which he has formed and expressed. Nor have his labours been without success, if the opinion of his translator may be trusted. Professor Elze has produced—so he ventures to think—a clear, compact, well-arranged narrative of the external facts of Byron's life; he has endeavoured to seize and fix the rich and varied

[1] Annalen. Sämmtliche Werke, xxvi. p. 245. 1858.
[2] P. 317. Historische und politische Aufsätze. Dritte Auflage. 1867.

traits of his character in an analysis as elaborate as it is, perhaps, unsparing; and in his last chapter he seeks to assign to Byron the place which is his due, not merely in the literature of England, but in the literature of Europe.

It is undeniable that, partly from the fluctuations to which taste especially in poetry is exposed, and partly from the rise of new poetic schools, the vast influence, once exercised by the works of Byron, had to a certain extent waned among us. But various signs may be discerned which seem to point to a revival of the old interest, not indeed in the fervour, hardly admitting of calm and thoughtful appreciation, which greeted the appearance of 'Childe Harold,' but in a more chastened and intelligent fashion, which will lead us, after all abatements are made, to see in Byron the most vigorous, the most original, poetical genius which England has produced since Milton. The attempts to darken the shadows that lay on some portions of his life may, perhaps, have contributed to produce this revulsion of feeling; but, even apart from this, it would have been an ill sign of the vigour and manliness of our own minds, if the fire, the force, the passion, the intense vitality, of Byron's poetry should have remained for any long period of time unknown or unrecognised. Another biography, coming from a nation standing at the head of the culture of Europe, written, if not with new materials yet from a somewhat different point of view, and which is not only narrative but critical, will, we trust, be as welcome to English readers as it seems to be opportune.

There is no want, indeed, in our own literature, of so-

called Lives of Lord Byron. Their abundance testifies, at least, to the interest with which everything relating to him and promising to add to our information was greedily received. A host of small men that hung round the skirts of the great poet, more intent on spying out his foibles and infirmities, than eager to apprehend the force of his genius, who noted down with vulgar alacrity the unguarded words and actions of one of the most free, frank, fearless, outspoken men that ever lived—for such was Byron—big with the importance of having seen, or talked, or dined with him, or stung, it may be, by the scorn he could not dissemble, rushed into print, some to gratify the curiosity, not in itself unlaudable, of the English public, some to vent their own spleen and malignity. Hence the baneful crop of 'Lives' and 'Recollections' and 'Conversations' of the Leigh Hunts, the Galts, the Medwins, the Trelawnys—books, the very existence of which is a stigma on our literature. From our memories let their records of things great and small concerning Byron be studiously spunged out, if we would guard ourselves against the shame of attempting to understand a great genius through a medium coloured and tainted by prejudice, ignorance, and vulgarity. Our only source, at present open, of authentic information remains in 'The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life,' by Moore, published at first (1829–1830) in two quarto volumes, and repeatedly since then in numerous editions. The 'Notices,' however, cannot be said to add much to the literary reputation of their author. They are encumbered with tedious, turgid reflections, which, however, not unfrequently act as a foil to those portions where Byron him-

self comes before us in his letters or journals, which exhibit the man and his character with marvellous distinctness. These Professor Elze has studied with evident interest and attention; and justly indeed, for they are open and sincere to an astonishing degree. That dangerous frankness which Hobhouse mentions as one of the traits of Byron's character is conspicuous in every line of them. But they abound in other merits. What letters or journals in the English language surpass or equal them for masculine vigour of understanding, for clearness, force, or directness of expression, for traits of feeling so tender yet so manly, for the wit and humour, for the fun and drollery, which sparkle throughout them? Our author is truest, we apprehend, in his delineations, when he reposes most simply and unreservedly on Byron's self-portraiture in those charming letters and journals.

But another and far different task was imposed on Professor Elze, from which, as he himself avows, he would most gladly have withdrawn, had his duties as biographer allowed it. The spirit of slander that had followed Byron throughout his life, and which seemed to slumber for a time after his death, awoke refreshed with the sleep of more than thirty years, to fashion and publish charges of darker hue and of more systematic purpose than the world had heard before. We have felt ourselves bound to speak with disrespect of the earlier records of certain authors; but even these, we firmly believe, though justly chargeable with detraction, would have scorned to circulate the calumnies of more recent times. This new phasis of slander was ushered into the world by the pretentious effusions—we regret to say it—of a lady who, though often

happy in her 'Sketches,' cannot have enhanced her reputation by condescending to relate, with such melo-dramatic vividness, the scene, as her imagination beheld it, that occurred on the evening of Byron's marriage day. That lady saw, not indeed, with the eye of the flesh, but with a deeper eye, 'in fine frenzy rolling,' 'a young creature led to the altar as a sacrifice. At that altar'—we are afraid it was only a table in the drawing-room at Seaham[1]—'she did not know that she was a sacrifice; but before sunset of that winter-day'—again we are sorry to interrupt the poetic flow of the lady's narrative, but no doubt the sun had set and darkness had come on, when the carriage with the victim arrived at Halnaby House—'she knew it, if a judgment may be formed from her face and attitude, when she alighted from the carriage on the afternoon of her marriage day. It was not the traces of tears which won the sympathy of the old butler, who stood at the open door. The bridegroom jumped out of the carriage and walked away. The bride alighted and came up the steps alone, with a countenance and frame agonised and listless with evident horror and despair. The old servant longed to offer his arm to the young and lonely creature, as an assurance of sympathy and protection.'[2] The scene is touching, the narrative painfully circumstantial. The fair narrator speaks as if she had stood nigh to the very door, at which the remarkable old butler was standing, who longed to rush out, when the barbarian left the lonely creature, and offer his arm to his young mistress? But shall we summon the lady's maid, who still

[1] See note, p. 154.

[2] Biographical Sketches by Harriet Martineau, p. 319. 1869.

their re-statement in this volume, let them remember that the biographer could not but do his best to refute and expose them. But even thus his painful task was not ended. The revelations of that article ere long generated an unclean thing after its image and likeness. To that article we owe the publication of 'Medora Leigh,' a story of crime, utter wretchedness and misery, which must scare the imagination and harrow the feelings of every reader. The tale itself, occupying about twenty widely printed pages, embedded in 260 of editorial remarks prefixed and post-fixed, constitutes on the whole the most shameless piece of book-making that ever fell under our notice. It must remain a marvel, how any man could be found to edit, or any publisher to give to the world, a narrative against the publication of which every motive held sacred among men loudly protested, and for the publication of which not a fragment of ground or reason could be alleged or specified. This sad story also Professor Elze considered himself bound to enter upon, and has so interwoven with his narrative as to make the excision of it an insuperable difficulty to his translator.

The last two chapters, the one on the 'Characteristics,' and the other on the 'Place of Byron in literature,' will probably be regarded as the most important and novel of the volume. Great care has evidently been bestowed on the composition of the former; but the translator cannot repress the expression of his conviction, that Professor Elze's analysis of Byron's character would have gained in truthfulness and generosity, if he had been less swayed and guided by the authorities by which he has conducted it. To none of them belong the wise reverence which

Lockhart so finely expresses in the concluding remarks of his Life of Scott. Speaking of the extreme difficulty of interpreting human character, he says: 'Such considerations have always induced me to regard with small respect the attempt to delineate fully and exactly any human being's character. I distrust, even in very humble cases, our capacity for judging our neighbours fairly; and I cannot but pity the presumption that must swell in the heart and brain of any ordinary brother of the race, when he dares to pronounce *ex cathedrâ* on the whole structure and complexion of a great mind, from the comparatively narrow and scanty materials which can by possibility have been placed before him. Nor is the difficulty to my view lessened—perhaps, it is rather increased—when the great man is a great artist.'[1] What character so demanded the exercise of the wise and considerate spirit of these remarks as Lord Byron's? But, alas! how seldom has he received this generous measure. He, whose mobility was the most exquisite, who was as easily acted on by external circumstances and agitated by the passion or even humours of the moment, as an Æolian harp by the breezes of heaven, was too often subjected to a microscopic scrutiny, under which no character could ever appear harmonious and which must distort even its good, while it magnified its evil traits. We would, therefore, that Professor Elze had sifted before he used so implicitly his authorities; though, perhaps, it be unreasonable to complain, that the German biographer should have drawn the weapons he has

[1] Lockhart's Life of Scott, vol. x. p. 222. Edin. 1857.

employed to disparage the character of Byron from the abundant armoury furnished by English detraction.

It is pleasant to dwell for a moment on the relations, though they never, alas! became personal, that subsisted between Goethe and Byron. No contemporary more thoroughly understood or more joyously recognised the genius of Byron, or followed with more loving interest his wandering steps through life, than Goethe; and, on the other hand, by no Englishman of his generation were the vast capacities of Goethe more instinctively felt and discerned than by Byron. Ignorant though he was of the German language, and dependent on the good offices of Shelley or M. G. Lewis to translate for him some of his masterpieces, he had penetration of mind to apprehend the might, and sympathy of genius to feel the inspiration, of his elder brother in the noble art, while English critics of great repute—in their day—were laboriously striving, in the plenitude of their ignorance and prejudice, and in the unconsciousness of their own impotence, to grin down one of the mightiest intellects the world ever saw.

To Goethe he dedicated his 'Sardanapalus,' as an 'act of homage of a literary vassal to his liege lord,' and afterwards his 'Werner,' 'as one of his humblest admirers.' On his last voyage to Greece he received at Leghorn, July 24, 1823, through a young Englishman, Mr. Sterling, the verses which Goethe wrote and sent to cheer him in his noble enterprise for the liberation of Greece.[1] Byron returned his sincere acknowledgments—on the same day—in the letter which is to be found in Moore's 'Life,' vol. vi.

[1] See Goethe's Werke, xxvi. p. 436.

p. 70, and which Goethe laid up to be preserved among his most precious documents and as the worthiest evidence of the relation that had subsisted between them. Both poets fondly cherished the hope that they should one day meet, should the younger return from Greece.

The news of Byron's death, within less than a year after this exchange of mutual homage and respect, filled Goethe with a deep and tender grief, and inspired him to utter the prophecy, which our readers will find in the final words of the last chapter of Professor Elze's 'Life.'

If our generation is to see the fulfilment of those remarkable words, one pre-eminent duty remains to be performed. The stains which have rested on Byron's character must be wiped away at once and decisively. The foul calumnies—and even from the evidence we possess we venture fearlessly to call them such—whispered in former years and loudly and unblushingly uttered in recent days, must be proved to be such. England has waited long for the final and complete vindication which the friend of Byron was known to have written. In 1830 that vindication was all but published,[1] but, overruled by Lord Holland's advice, Lord Broughton withheld it. With the profoundest deference to his memory and judgment, we regret and lament his decision. If that vindication had then been published—being what it is averred by Lord Broughton himself to be—could the morality of England have been shocked, and the literary history of England defiled, by the pollutions of the Stowe 'Revelations'? Is it possible that these would ever have poisoned the air, if the truth regarding the separation and

[1] See Edinburgh Review, April number, 1871, p. 298.

its causes had then been given to the world? But that vindication, though withheld, still exists. 'My sole wish' —so writes Lord Broughton in his posthumous 'Memoirs' —'was to do my duty by my friend; and I hope I have done that sufficiently by leaving behind me, to be used if necessary, a full and scrupulously accurate account of the transaction in question,' i.e. of the separation and its causes. That full and scrupulously accurate account has been read by excellent and impartial judges—by one, specially, who occupies a prominent position in the world of letters, and who, though in no wise blind to the faults of Byron, sees in it at once the judgment and fidelity of the friend, but above all the exculpation, thorough and complete, of Lord Byron from those charges which it is revolting even to think of. The publication of this 'Memoir' seems to be imperatively demanded, if we are to place Byron, as Goethe prophesies, permanently beside those in whom England may evermore take pride,—the great names of our literature. Let us see him as he was; no perfect or faultless man; but an object of contemplation far more interesting if not better,—a man of noblest gifts, sorely tried and tempted, erring too often and too sadly, but who withal has given to the English-speaking race poems of such fiery vigour and originality as place him high, if not highest, among our poets of the past, and higher than any of his own or

ement day; and who extended the name and fame of
widely than any Englishman of the nine-
. Round the very name of Byron an
l vapours has collected; surely if the
that atmosphere exist, England, to

whom Byron belongs, has some right to expect they will be so employed.

With regard to the translation, an endeavour has been made to render it faithful to the original yet idiomatic in its English. The sheets, while passing through the press, were sent to the author, and have had the benefit therefore of his careful inspection. Some of the notes in the original, useful merely to German readers, have been omitted in the translation, to which, on the other hand, have been added by the translator others which seem to throw light on the text. In the Appendix will be found information on some points of interest regarding Lord Byron, which the translator has collected, but which exceed the measure which mere foot-notes can claim. Nor will readers, we trust, regret to find there the more generous delineations of Byron, which his friends Harness, Hobhouse, Finlay, and Stanhope have drawn, specially the two first named, who knew the poet, one from boyhood, the other from youth, and who knowing him loved him with an affection that bore the strong test of more than forty years' reflection.

The translator and publisher desire to return their sincere thanks to Mrs. Webb for her permission, so graciously conceded, to engrave the portrait in her possession prefixed to this present volume. It represents Lord Byron in the gown worn by noblemen at Trinity College, Cambridge, on festive occasions. It was long in the possession of the late Mr. Litchfield of Cambridge, well known to the members of that University for half a century, for whom, indeed, the original water-colour, we believe, was made by Mr. Gilchrist. After many refusals to part

with his treasure, Mr. Litchfield, not long before his death, gave it to the Duke of St. Albans, by whom it was given to Mrs. Webb, and at Newstead it is preserved among many other memorials of the poet.

The translator and publisher have also to thank the Master and Seniors of Trinity College, Cambridge, for their permission to have the boy Byron's first letter engraved, in facsimile, for this volume.

Nor must the translator omit to acknowledge the kindness of Mrs. Becher in allowing him to collate the unique volume of the early poems of Byron in her possession, which she treasures with a care proportionate to its extraordinary rarity and interest; or of the Rev. Alfred and Mrs. Tatham, who is the daughter of Byron's old friend and monitor the Rev. John Thomas Becher, and who still preserves the traditions, fast fading away, of Byron's life at Southwell.

Sir Albert Woods, Garter, revised, with much courtesy, the Note (A) on the Byron lineage, and will accept, we trust, the grateful thanks of the translator who ventured on ground totally new and strange to him, and who feels that his aid only saved him from grievous blunders.

Nor, lastly, must he forget to record thankfully the aid he received from Mr. John Place, of Nottingham; and from M. Albert Patte of Paris, who transcribed, from the Journal in the 'Bibliothèque Impériale,' the whole of the 'Fragment' in which M. Coulmann[1] records his experiences.

December 15, 1871.

[1] See Appendix note (c) p. 441, *et seq.*

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Directions to Binder.

PORTRAIT OF LORD BYRON . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACSIMILE OF THE BOY BYRON'S FIRST LETTER . . *To face page* 1

From the Original in st. [illegible]

or to go home the nearest way as it is now quite well

but too small to carry me

I have sent a young Rabbit which I beg Miss

Frances will accept of and which I promised to

send before— My Mamma desires her best compliments to you all in which I join— I am

Dear Aunt

Yours sincerely

Byron

LIFE

OF

LORD BYRON.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD.

1788–1798.

THE Byron family ranks among those historical races, in which a strongly-marked, ominous family type has been propagated from generation to generation. With Schiller's Thekla Byron might have said:—

> There's a dark spirit walking in our house,
> And swiftly will the Destiny close on us.[1]
>
> Es geht ein finstrer Geist durch unser Haus,
> Und schleunig will das Schicksal mit uns enden.

For unbridled passions, defiant self-will, arrogant contempt of the received order of things and of the world's opinion, associated with high endowments and much resolute energy of character, formed the inauspicious inheritance, which, in full measure, accumulated on the head of the poet. Of this Byron was conscious, and repeatedly expressed it. 'Some curse'—he writes, in a

[1] Coleridge's translation. *Die Piccolomini*, Act ii. sc. 8.

letter[1] to his friend Davies on the death of his mother—'hangs over me and mine.' He was nevertheless proud, to an extraordinary degree, of his descent, prouder, it has been said, than of his works. He laid great stress on his being of a Norman not of a Saxon family, and lost no opportunity of asserting it; nor, strange to say, was his pride in any wise ruffled by the undeniable blot in his genealogical tree, indicated in his escutcheon by the 'bordure,' the sign of illegitimacy; for that he had no knowledge of this circumstance is inconceivable, though he constantly concealed it by his reticence from himself and others.[2]

The legendary genealogy of the family reaches back, as a matter of course, to a hoar antiquity. A branch of the original Scandinavian Buruns settled, according to this authority, in Normandy, from whence two members of the family, Erneis and Ralph de Burun, followed the Conqueror to England, where the former received important possessions in Yorkshire and Lancashire, while the latter is mentioned in Domesday Book as a great landed proprietor in Nottinghamshire. The accounts, however, regarding these two heroic progenitors, as well as of their successors, are too vague and unauthentic to reward the trouble of repeating them in fuller detail; though, perhaps, it may be remarked, that the growth of the possessions of the family was rapid; that, about the time of Henry II. (1155–1189), the present form of the name 'Byron' seems to have been fixed;[3] that—a requisite in every correct

[1] Moore's *Life and Letters of Lord Byron*, ii. 39.

[2] Galt's *Life of Lord Byron*, preface, p. v. Life, p. 6. 2nd edition, London, 1830. [Thomas Watts] *Athenæum*, May 16, 1868, p. 687 *et seq.* See also Appendix (A).

[3] The poet pronounced his name in different ways, yet generally almost as a monosyllable with the short *y*. In Italy his friends, following perhaps his own example, used to quiz the Countess Guiccioli for pro-

genealogical tree—some members of the family are said to have taken part in the Crusades, a fact to which the poet in his lines 'On leaving Newstead Abbey,' and elsewhere, refers with pride.[1] Probably, however, this tradition owed its origin to an old wood-carving at Newstead representing a Saracen between a Christian knight and a Western maiden. Not to mention that Newstead came into the possession of the family only in the reign of Henry VIII., this carving belonged undoubtedly to a later period than that of the Crusades, and had a Biblical meaning, referring probably to the history of Susannah.

At a later period the family possessions passed to an illegitimate scion, John Byron, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1559 and who continued the race. His descendants were among the most faithful and devoted adherents of the Stuarts, and a second Sir John Byron, the eldest of seven brothers, was raised, October 24, 1643, to the peerage as Baron Byron of Rochdale in the county palatine of Lancaster; and as Governor of the Tower and commander of a part of the royal forces, this first baron naturally incurred the enmity of the Parliament. His second wife was a daughter of Lord Kilmorey and the widow of Peter Warburton. Of her Pepys in his journal relates, that she was the seventeenth mistress of Charles II. when abroad, and did not leave him, till she had extorted from him an assignment of silver plate to the value of 4000*l.*, 'but by delays, thanks be to God, she died before she had it.'[2] In default of sons the

nouncing Byron very broadly with the long *y*. But England, and with England the world, follows the Countess, while Byron's own pronunciation has fallen into forgetfulness as an aristocratic whim. Leigh Hunt's *Byron*, i. 179. Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 37.

[1] One of the poems in the *Hours of Idleness*. Compare 'Elegy on Newstead Abbey,' in the same collection.

[2] Pepys' *Diary*, p. 434. London, Alex. Murray, 1870.

peerage devolved on this Lord Byron's brother, Richard 1605–1679, whose epitaph in the vault at Hucknall-Torkard Church proclaims that, though like his brothers he lost his property and possessions through his faithful service to Charles I., he yet succeeded in repurchasing a portion of the family inheritance.[1]

Richard's eldest son William, the third Lord, married Elizabeth, daughter of Viscount Chaworth, after whose death, 1683, he married a second time: and died November 18, 1695, and was also buried in the church of Hucknall-Torkard. He had formed an intimate friendship with Thomas Shipman, a very inferior poet, who frequently sang the praises of his Lordship's family, and, indeed, in Shipman's 'Carolina or Loyal Poems' (1683), there is a poem written by this nobleman, from which it appears that he was himself a verse-maker, and wherein he thus expresses his supreme desire:—

> My whole ambition only does extend
> To gain the name of Shipman's faithful friend.[2]

These verses, whatever else they may be, are certainly not Byronic. Shipman is now mentioned only because of

[1] The following is the epitaph *in extenso*: 'Beneath in a vault is interred the body of Richard Lord Byron, who with the rest of his family, being seven brothers, faithfully served King Charles I. in the Civil War, who suffered much for their loyalty, and lost all their present fortune; yet it pleased God so to bless the honest endeavours of the said Richard Lord Byron that he repurchased part of their ancient inheritance, which he left to his posterity with a laudable memory for his great piety and charity; he departed this life on the 4th day of October, A.D. 1679, in the 74th year of his age. In the same vault is interred the Lady Elizabeth his first wife, daughter of Geo. Rossel, Esq., by whom he had ten children, and the Lady Elizabeth his second wife, daughter to ht and Baronet, who appointed this monument ory of her dear husband, and for her great piety ome better than that of sons and daughters.'
'her poetic Lord Byron,' by Thomas Watts in 1868, p. 401.

his intimacy with this Lord Byron, who, again, is remembered solely on account of his great descendant.

It was the grandson of this poetic Byron, William, the fifth Lord (1722–1798), who attained so sad a celebrity by the duel with his kinsman and neighbour, Mr. Chaworth. At a dinner at the Star and Garter Hotel, Pall Mall, January 29, 1765, this peer, a licentious, quarrelsome, vindictive man, fell into a dispute with Mr. Chaworth on the quantity of game in their respective parks—according to another account, on the mode of preserving game—and became at last so heated, that he insisted on settling the quarrel on the spot. Forcing Chaworth into another room, he closed the door, and there by the feeble light of a single candle, without seconds or witnesses, the so-called duel took place, in which Chaworth, although a better swordsman than his antagonist, was mortally wounded. On the ground of the testimony of the dying man, the coroner's jury had no other course than to give a verdict of 'Wilful murder,' and Lord Byron was consequently imprisoned in the Tower, and in due course tried in Westminster Hall. The interest excited by the event was prodigious; peers' tickets of admission sold for six guineas each; and after a trial, which lasted for two days, the accused was unanimously declared 'guilty of manslaughter.' Pleading, however, his privilege as a peer, he was accordingly set at liberty without further punishment. But no privilege could protect him from the punishment whose sources are within; henceforward he secluded himself entirely from the world, or, to speak more correctly, he was excluded by the world. When compelled by business to go to London, he travelled under the name of Mr. Waters. By all the world he was called the mad, or the wicked, Lord Byron. His neighbours hated him, his inferiors avoided him, his wife separated

from him. The populace, always inclined to fantastic exaggerations, told the most incredible stories of him. Thus he was said, while taking a drive, to have shot his coachman for some small offence, to have then thrown his body inside to his wife, and, mounting the box, to have driven off himself. On another occasion he was said to have pushed his wife into the lake at Newstead, whence she was rescued by the gardener, who happened to be near. From hatred to his son and heir, whose marriage he disapproved, he not only allowed Newstead to fall into decay, but cut down the trees on the estate to such an extent, that at his death it was almost entirely without timber. He sold also illegally the property of Rochdale. His son, however, died before him, in the same year in which the poet was born. He found his only amusement on the lake in front of the Abbey; on its banks he built those tasteless miniature citadels, which are still standing, and the further to ornament it he had a small vessel conveyed thither on wheels from the Eastern coast. His only companions were, according to the account of the poet himself,[1] the crickets, which he used to feed with his own hand and had so tamed that they crawled over him. If they misbehaved he beat them with a wisp of straw; and at his death they are said to have left the house in a body.

The brother of this, the fifth Lord Byron, was the celebrated Admiral John Byron (1733–1786), the grandfather of the poet, who found in his life at sea a sphere suited to bring forth the better sides of the family character, and who enjoyed universal respect in the Navy. His courage and endurance in extraordinary dangers and adventures gained for him the honourable epithet of 'hardy Byron,'

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 31. Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 75.

while his proverbial ill-luck with regard to stormy weather was the origin among the sailors of his nickname of 'foul weather Jack.' He never made a voyage without encountering dreadful storms; and in allusion to this, his grandson, after his separation from his wife, says, that his grandsire's fate had been reversed in him: 'he had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.'[1] He served as a midshipman while a youth of seventeen, in the squadron under Commodore Anson sent against the Spanish settlements in the Pacific. Every vessel of the fleet, one after the other, was wrecked, his own ship, the 'Wager,' May 15, 1740, on the west coast of America. The crew were saved and took refuge on a desolate island, to which they gave the name of 'Mount Misery,' and whence they ventured, after some months, to attempt the voyage home in the cutter and long-boat through the Magellan Straits. The cutter was lost in the attempt, while Byron in the long-boat succeeded in reaching the Portuguese settlements in the Brazils, whence, 1746, he returned to Europe, and twenty years afterwards astonished the world by the description of his voyage.[2] He subsequently distinguished himself in the war against France: from 1764 to 1766 in command of two ships he made a voyage of discovery in the South Sea, during which he sailed round the world.[3] He was

[1] Epistle to Augusta.

[2] 'A Narrative of the Hon. John Byron (Commodore in a late Expedition round the World), containing an Account of the great distresses suffered by himself and his companions on the coast of Patagonia, from the year 1740 till their arrival in England 1746; written by himself. London, 1768.' Byron made use of his 'grand-dad's' narrative in the description of the shipwreck in the second Canto of 'Don Juan.'

[3] A Voyage round the World in His Majesty's ship the 'Dolphin,' commanded by the Hon. Commodore Byron. By an Officer on board the said ship. London, 1767; reprinted in Hawkesworth's *Account of the Voyages of Byron, Wallis, Cartaret, and Cook*, 3 vols. 4to. London, 1773, and in Callander's *Terra Australis cognita*.

afterwards appointed Governor of Newfoundland, and, finally, again fought against the French in the waters of the West Indies. His passion for the sea and love of adventure are plainly discernible in his grandson.

Admiral Byron had two sons, John Byron (1755–1791), the father of the poet, and George Anson Byron (1758–1793), who entered the Navy and distinguished himself under Admiral Rodney, and three daughters. When William Byron, the only grandson of the fifth Lord, lost his life in a skirmish in the Mediterranean 1794, the father of the poet, and on his decease the poet himself, became heir presumptive of the peerage. The 'mad Lord Byron' (he who killed Chaworth in the duel, who survived both his son and his grandson, could, however, never bring himself to recognise his grand-nephew, the poet, as his heir; he used to speak of him as the 'little boy who lives at Aberdeen.' The father of the poet inherited pre-eminently the darker sides of the family character. He received his education at the celebrated School of Westminster, and afterwards at a French military academy, and then entered the Guards, with whom he served some years in America. He soon gave himself up to such a dissolute life, that he fell into general disrepute, and became known as 'mad Jack Byron,' and was disowned by his father. His bad reputation attained its climax, when in the year 1778 he ran off, in a way that occasioned great scandal, with the Marchioness Carmarthen, whom after her divorce he married. Lady Carmarthen (née Lady Amelia D'Arcy) was the only daughter and heiress of the last Earl of Holderness, and the poet was, in after years, a visitor in the very house which she had brought to his father.[1]

The couple lived in Paris, where the Captain became

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 244.

intimate with the old Marshal Biron, commander of the French Guard, who regarded him as a distant kinsman. His conduct to his wife is said to have been so execrable that she died (1784), after a few years, of a broken heart. The fruit of this unhappy marriage was Augusta (born 1783), afterwards Mrs. Leigh. In a short time Captain Byron ran through her fortune, a recollection which, perhaps, induced the poet to make provision in his will for his half-sister, Mrs. Leigh, and her children.

Captain Byron returned to England, and as he needed considerable means for his extravagant mode of living, he soon began the search for another wife, whom he found in a Scottish heiress, Miss Catherine Gordon of Gight in Aberdeenshire, an orphan, probably, both on father's and mother's side. Her family also was not without its dark shadow. Her father, a respected, sensible, and amiable man, but subject to fits of despondency, was found dead in the Avon at Bath, having scarcely completed his fortieth year, and it was conjectured that his death was not accidental. Another near relative made an attempt to poison himself. The ancestors of Miss Gordon had served the cause of the Stuarts, especially of the Pretender, with not less zealous devotion than the Byrons. They were, besides, related to the Stuarts, George, Earl Huntly, having married Annabella, a daughter of James I. From Sir William Gordon, the third son of this marriage, Byron's mother was descended, so that on his mother's side also he had ample food for his pride of ancestry. As a boy he insisted on being called George Byron Gordon, and his mother he always called 'the honourable,' to which she was not, strictly speaking, entitled. At a later period, however, he spoke only of his paternal, never of his maternal ancestry. His mother exceeded him, if that were possible, in pride of birth. She was, says

Byron,[1] as proud as Lucifer of her descent from the Stuarts, and looked down with contempt on the ducal line of the Gordons as on the younger branch. Still lower she placed, as a matter of course, the Byrons, although these, as her son so carefully points out, traced their descent uninterruptedly in the male line.[2] There is no account of the manner in which Miss Gordon became acquainted with Captain Byron. A creature of mere impulse, she was probably won by the manly beauty of his person and especially by his fine eyes. To beauty she herself had no pretensions; she was short and corpulent, and was thoroughly Scottish in her whole nature. A strange anecdote is told of the excitability of her feelings even before her marriage. When, one evening in the year 1784, at the theatre in Edinburgh, she saw Mrs. Siddons perform the part of Isabella in Southern's 'Fatal Marriage,' she was so overcome that she fell into convulsions, and had to be carried out, uttering with a loud cry—an exclamation belonging to the character represented by Mrs. Siddons—'O my Biron, my Biron.'[3] On May 17, 1786, a contract of marriage in the Scottish form was concluded between them; and an unknown Scottish rhymester took occasion to compose a warning poem addressed to the bride, whose gloomy prediction—

> Ye've married, ye've married wi' Johnny Byron,
> To squander the lands o' Gight awa'—

was only too soon to receive its fulfilment.[4] That Captain Byron had married her merely in order to extricate himself

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 37. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* i. 7, 8. [Sir Walter Scott, then in his fourteenth year, was in the theatre on this occasion, and has described the scene in his most interesting letter to Moore giving his recollections of Byron. See Moore's *Life*, iii. 160 (note).]

[4] That the marriage, as Moore (*Ibid.*) believes, was celebrated at Bath, is extremely improbable. At any rate this could only have been a supplementary marriage, according to the English form, after the young couple had left Scotland.

from the debts he had contracted, cannot be disputed; indeed, he did not hesitate to avow this as his purpose. Within the space of a year he had not only spent the ready money he received with his wife in the liquidation of his debts, but had also cut down the timber and borrowed 8,000*l.* by a mortgage on the estate; and in the following year the estate itself had to be sold to Lord Haddo (son of the Earl of Aberdeen), for the sum of 17,850*l.*[1] Of her whole fortune, which may have amounted to twenty-three or twenty-four thousand pounds, there remained to the poor lady the small sum of 3,000*l.*, from the interest of which she was soon obliged to support herself and her child. In the course of the summer of 1786, Captain and Mrs. Byron left Gight, never to see it again, and went to France, for which country Captain Byron seems to have cherished a peculiar predilection; there they lived a considerable time at Chantilly.

At the end of the following year they returned to England accompanied by Augusta, then about six years old, and very soon after their arrival in London, where they occupied furnished lodgings in 24 Holles Street, Cavendish Square, Mrs. Byron was delivered, January 22, 1788, of a boy, her first and only child.[2] This was the future poet. The false modesty of Mrs. Byron

[1] Previous to the sale of the property, all the doves—so runs the legend—and a flock of herons which for many years had built their nests near a large loch there, left the house of Gight and came to Lord Haddo's. When this was told to Lord Haddo, 'Let the birds come'—said he—'and do them no harm, for the land will soon follow.' This was the fulfilment of a Scottish legendary prophecy—

'When the heron leaves the tree,
The Lairds o' Gight shall landless be.'

Gight, the situation of which is extremely beautiful, has since remained in the possession of the Aberdeen family; at first Lord Haddo occupied it for some time, but the house afterwards fell into complete decay.

[2] See Appendix (B).

is said to have been the cause of one foot of the infant receiving an injury or twist at the birth, which laid the foundation of the deformity that threw so dark a shadow over the poet's whole life;[1] for while Scott's lameness left his heart untouched, Byron's was ever embittered from this source, especially as he appears early to have been made acquainted with the cause to which he owed it. This unhappy circumstance was so significant for him and for his poetry, that we shall have to return to it more fully in the sequel. According to a condition imposed by will, he who married the heiress of Gight must assume the name of Gordon; as this does not appear to have been done by Captain Byron (nothing definite is ever said about the matter), in order to be just to the spirit of this provision, the name of Gordon was given to the child. The Duke of Gordon, as head of the family, Colonel Duff of Fetteresso (near Stonehaven, to the south of Aberdeen), and George Anson Byron, uncle of the infant, acted as godfathers—the two former probably by representatives, if the baptism did not take place in Scotland.

The circumstances of the family were already so shattered, that Mrs. Byron soon afterwards went alone with her child to Scotland, where she was at first received at the house of a relation, until, in the beginning of the year 1790, she settled in a humble dwelling at Aberdeen. As the little Augusta was about the same time sent to her mother's relations, and henceforward appears to have been educated by her grandmother the Countess of Holderness with her step-sister, who was afterwards the Countess of Chichester, Captain Byron was again left to himself, and

[1] Lord Byron's conversation with the Marquis of Sligo, Moore's ... 47. Whether the alleged cause of the deformity be the right ... amounts to very little, as it is transparent from Byron's own ... believed it was.

could without hindrance indulge in dissipation so far as his limited means permitted him. It was the failure of these which induced him to follow his wife to Aberdeen. Mrs. Byron at first received him into her house, but their incompatibility of temper grew to such a height that they soon occupied separate dwellings, although for a considerable time they continued to visit each other, and occasionally even to drink tea together. Yet even this amount of intercourse at last ceased. His interest in the welfare of the child, the Captain now showed by kindly greeting the nurse as often as he met her with her charge in their walks. He even expressed a strong desire to have the boy with him for a day or two on a visit. Mrs. Byron was only to be moved to give her consent by the representation of the nurse, that if his father kept the child but one night, he certainly would not do so for a second. The result corresponded perfectly with her prediction. The child, as might have been expected, could not possibly be a very quiet or peaceable inmate without his nurse in a house utterly strange to him, even if the same uncontrollably passionate temper had not already displayed itself in him, by which subsequently he was so completely mastered. The sole aim of Captain Byron in Aberdeen had been to extort, if possible, more money from his miserable wife; and, in spite of her poverty, he actually succeeded in obtaining from her the requisite means to enable him to fly (1790) to France to escape from his creditors. Tenderness for him was not altogether extinct in his wife, who displayed towards him alternate sallies of violence and affection; and when, in the following year, she received the account of his death at Valenciennes, she broke forth into such vehement lamentations that her shrieks were heard in the street.

Things being thus, the death of the father was, in fact, a blessing to the family, which was thus delivered from

an oppressor. Byron, indeed, in after life, shortly before setting out for Missolonghi, took up the defence of his father, endeavouring to represent the charges made against him as calumnies.[1] Little weight, however, is to be given to this apology, and, in the letter in question, pride of family, which would not endure that a member of his house should be depreciated by a stranger, is the most apparent trait. Especially he will not admit, that his father was brutal and ill-treated his wives; Lady Carmarthen, he says, did not die from grief, but because she insisted on accompanying her husband to the hunting field too soon after Augusta's birth. That he was careless and dissipated, and squandered the fortune of his two wives, he cannot deny; but, he argues, this concerns none but his heirs, i.e. himself and his sister Augusta. The prejudical influence which the character of the father, his immoral course of life, and his early death (probably caused by his excesses), exercised on Byron, was of yet greater importance than the mere loss of property. Byron afterwards, indeed, admitted and deeply lamented, that he was deprived of the love and guidance of a father, especially as he himself never possessed the moral power to repair by self-education the injury he had thus sustained.[2] His

[1] In a letter to Monsieur J. J. Coulmann (dated Genoa, July 12, 1823), occasioned by the essay which Amedée Pichot had prefixed to his translation of Byron's works. *Notes and Queries*, 4th series, iii. 224 *et seq.* See also Appendix (C).

[2] Compare the poem entitled 'Childish Recollections' in the *Hours of Idleness*:—

'Stern death forbade my orphan youth to share
The tender guidance of a father's care.
Can rank or e'en a guardian's name supply
The love which glistens in a father's eye?
For this can wealth or titles' sound atone,
Made by a parent's early loss my own?
What brother springs a brother's love to seek?
What sister's gentle kiss has pressed my cheek?'

want of brothers or sisters also, for he learnt to know Augusta only after he was grown up, he felt deeply, and describes it as a part of his fatality, that the later generations of his family had been continued by only children. 'My daughter' (so he says in his Diary), 'my wife, my half-sister, my mother, my sister's mother, my natural daughter and myself, are or were all only children.'[1] But (he adds characteristically enough) 'the fiercest animals have the rarest number in their litters—as lions, tigers, and even elephants, which are mild in comparison.'

After the death of the father, all parental duties and the care of his education devolved entirely on his mother. By true motherly love, by a noble womanly example, by gentle yet firm intelligent guidance, Mrs. Byron might have done much to supply the loss of the head of the family. But, on the contrary, it is almost to be deplored that the poor boy had not lost his mother at the same time with his father; the sad lot of being an orphan, and of growing up among strangers, would, in many respects, have been fortunate for him. The first impressions which the child received were poisoned by domestic discord and the feeling of poverty. If the father were a heartless, selfish rake, the mother, destitute of all self-control, blindly yielded herself to all the impulses of the moment, and was as much wanting in solemn feelings of duty as her husband. A slave to the most violent tempers, she overwhelmed the child alternately with outbursts of rage and love, so that he could feel for her neither affection nor respect. At one time she beat him, called him 'a lame brat,' and railed at him: 'You little dog, you are a thorough Byron, you are just as bad as your father;' at another she covered him with kisses, and declared his

[1] Note to *Don Juan*, canto i. 37, *Life and Works*, xv. 129.

eyes were as beautiful as his father's. The caresses of the child she sometimes repelled, sometimes laughed at. Where was the moral stay to be found, on which the child might have leaned, and by which the training of his heart and mind might have been regulated? Of what incalculable influence are the impressions of the first years of childhood, and how true it is that education must begin from the cradle, was never shown more truly than in the case of Byron; and his was a nature pre-eminently receptive, a soil on which the seed which was scattered bore fruit a thousand-fold. Moore relates[1] how, when the child once tore his new frock in one of his 'silent rages,' as Byron himself called them, he had to endure not the silent but the very loud explosion of his mother's rage. Thus it was that the child attached himself far more to the nurse than to the mother, and showed far more obedience and affection to the former than to the latter.

It was also from this servant, called May Gray, that Byron received his first, though, certainly, not very scholastic instruction. According to the advice of the celebrated John Hunter, with whom Dr. Livingstone, the family-physician, had corresponded on the subject, the lame leg of the child was for a long time placed in bandages and machines, and when at bed-time these were applied by May Gray—a different mother would not have committed this duty to a servant—she used to sing him to sleep, or told him stories and legends, with which, child-like, he was delighted. She also taught him to repeat a number of the Psalms, the first and the twenty-third being the earliest impressed on his memory. In a letter from Italy, written in the year 1821, Byron asked Mr. Murray,

[1] [The story is given somewhat differently in the *Life*, i. 13.]

his publisher, to send him a Bible, and adds: 'Don't forget this, for I am a great reader and admirer of those books, and had read them through and through before I was eight years old—that is to say the Old Testament, for the New struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure.'[1] It may be supposed also, that beside the narratives of the Bible, stories of his paternal and maternal ancestors—specially of his grandpapa the admiral—would be told to pass away the time: hence would be awakened in him a love for sea-voyages, and for lands and adventures lying beyond the seas. By the death of his cousin, in the year 1794, the spirit and fancy of the precocious child would scarcely fail to be directed to the Mediterranean. He would hear too accounts of his grand-uncle at Newstead, and of his duel (probably not represented in its true character) with Mr. Chaworth;[2] this disastrous event, at any rate, made so deep an impression upon him, that he came to regard this mode of redress for real or supposed injuries and insults as a kind of family right, and even as a boy he is said to have carried small pistols loaded in his waistcoat pocket.

Before Byron had completed his fifth year, he was sent to school, probably more in order that the house should be rid of a restless inmate than that he should learn anything. The school which was chosen appears, in fact,

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 265.

[2] In the above-mentioned letter to Monsieur J. J. Coulmann we read the following account: 'As to the Lord Byron who killed Mr. Chaworth in a duel, so far from retiring from the world, he made the tour of Europe, and was appointed the master of the stag-hounds after that event, and did not give up society until his son had offended him, by marrying in a manner contrary to his duty. So far from feeling any remorse at having killed Mr. Chaworth, who was a *spadassin* and celebrated for his quarrelsome disposition, he always kept the sword which he used on that occasion in his bed-chamber, and there it still was when he died.' There could scarcely be a representation more one-sided or incorrect. Was this the result of self-delusion or was it deliberate falsehood?

to have been little suited for the latter purpose. Under the direction of a Mr. Bowers, the children—it was a mixed school of boys and girls—were taught to read. Byron in one of his journals says,[1] that he learnt to repeat fluently by rote his first lessons of monosyllables (God made man—Let us love Him), but merely by ear, without knowing a single letter. When this fact was detected at home, his ears were boxed—very undeservedly, adds Byron, for it was by ear only that he had acquired his letters.[2] After a year there, the child was removed from this school (Nov. 19. 1793), whose chief merit consisted in its cheapness—one guinea only being the charge for a whole year's tuition.

Byron was now taught by several masters in succession; first, by 'a devout clever little clergyman, named Ross,' whose mild manners and good-natured painstaking he much praises, and with whom, according to his own statement, he made astonishing progress.[3] His next master was a Mr. Paterson, 'a very serious, saturnine, but kind young man,' a rigid Presbyterian minister, the son of his shoemaker, but a good scholar;[4] with him he began Latin in Ruddiman's Grammar, and remained with him, till he was admitted (1794) into the Grammar School. He attended besides, according to Dallas's[5] account, De Loyaute's (probably the assumed name of a French *emigré*) academy, at which he made himself acquainted with the elements of French. The Latin school consisted of five classes under four teachers, and about 150 pupils; the fourth and fifth (the two highest) being taught by the rector. Byron began at the lowest and 'threaded all the classes to the fourth,'[6] when he left

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 17–19. [2] *Ibid.* i. 18. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron*, p. 2. London, 1824.
[6] Moore, *ut supra*.

Aberdeen. Like Walter Scott, he did not distinguish himself at school, being deficient not so much in quickness of apprehension, as in love of study and perseverance. His place was generally in the lower regions, and he displayed little ambition to rise higher. To stimulate emulation among the boys, it was the custom of the school to invert the order of the class, so that the highest stood lowest. On these occasions, and these only, it sometimes happened that Byron was at the head of the class, and the master, bantering him, would say: 'Now, George man, let me see how soon you will be at the foot again.'[1] Again, as in Scott, so also in Byron, his mind was occupied and developed by subjects that lay beyond the sphere of the school; though, alas! no particulars exist making it possible for us to follow that development step by step in its course. What little we know, we owe to the occasional communications of the poet himself. As soon as he could read, history, he says,[2] became his grand passion, and in Roman history, the battle of Lake Regillus had especial charms for him. Besides this, descriptions of travels in the East, Turkish history, and the Arabian Nights, particularly interested him. '"Old Knolles,"' he said shortly before his death, 'was one of the first books which gave me pleasure.' 'Cantemir,' he says elsewhere, 'De Tott, Lady M. W. Montagu, Hawkins's translation of Mignot's History of the Turks, all travels or histories or books upon the East I could meet with, I had read before I was ten years old.'[3] In all probability, accident more than choice brought into his hand those books, by which his mind and imagination, even in childhood, were directed to the Levant. Regarded in this light, it appears as the very natural course of his development that he

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 21. [2] *Ibid.* p. 18.
[3] Note of the Editor's prefixed to the *Giaour*.

should in later life have turned his pilgrim's steps towards Turkey, and have laid there the scenes of his poetic tales, although other motives co-operated, with which the course of our narrative will make us acquainted. It is to be lamented, that we possess no knowledge of the time and manner he was introduced into the realms of poetry; what poets first opened to him the gates of Parnassus, and what impressions they stamped on his mind.

The circumstance that he was thus early left to himself, which is the characteristic in the formation of the mental qualities of the boy, constitutes also the main feature in the development of his character. According to the recollections of those who then knew him, he was affectionate and companionable with his school-fellows, but passionate, resentful, pre-eminently fearless and venturesome, and 'always more ready to give a blow than to take one.'[1] Passion and self-will that brooked no restraint, a temperament partly inherited, partly strengthened by education, or rather the absence of it, formed from his earliest days the essence of his character. Between Zeluco, the hero of a romance which at that time enjoyed great celebrity, and himself, a striking similarity was recognised even by Byron himself, though, in his usual fashion, he represents himself by this comparison in colours far too dark; it was, indeed, his expressed design to describe in Childe Harold a kind of 'poetical Zeluco.'[2] The life of Zeluco—such is the author's plan[3]—in spite of rank,

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 19. [2] Preface to *Childe Harold*, viii. 7.

[3] *Zeluco. Various Views of Human Nature, taken from Life and Manners, Foreign and Domestic.* In two volumes, Lond. 1789. Dr. John Moore, the author of this romance, who was born at Stirling, 1729, and died at Richmond, 1802, spent much of his life in Holland, France, Germany, and Italy. He wrote also many other works, and was the father of the celebrated General Sir John Moore, who fell at Corunna.

riches, and abilities, turns out unhappy and miserable, and this, merely because his self-will had been unrestrained in childhood. Zeluco, like Byron, loses his father early in life. As a child, he had displayed unmistakable symptoms of that vehement and imperious temper, to which he was by nature so disposed, and which had been held in check only by his father. 'But very soon after his death'—so it is said in the romance —'he indulged every humour and caprice; and his mistaken mother applauding the blusterings of petulance and pride as indications of spirit, his temper became more and more ungovernable, and at length seemed as inflammable as gunpowder, bursting into flashes of rage at the slightest touch of provocation.' As an example the following story is then given: 'Zeluco had a favourite sparrow, so tame that it picked crumbs from his hand and hopped familiarly on the table. One day it did not perform certain tricks which he had taught it to his satisfaction. This put the boy into a passion: the bird being frightened attempted to fly off the table. He suddenly seized it with his hand, and while it struggled to get free, with a curse he squeezed the little animal to death.'[1] But Zeluco was not merely passionate, but endued with great intellectual gifts and of an exceedingly engaging character, and in this respect presents a similarity with Byron, which, however, does not extend beyond the years of childhood, or at least diminishes as he grows up; for Zeluco ends as a consummate scoundrel.

The exceeding freedom and absence of control, which were allowed to the boy, acted most beneficially on his bodily development. As in Scott's case, so also in Byron's, his growth and strength suffered little from his deformity

[1] Zeluco, i. 3, 4.

and the play-ground was the place where he displayed his energy and ambition. He was distinguished in all games and exercises, even in those which demanded swiftness of foot. That in after life he became an excellent swimmer, and rider and shot, is well known. As a boy he knew no fear, and rather sought than avoided danger. Various anecdotes belonging to this period are preserved, which serve to give completeness and animation to the portrait; such only, it is true, as redound to his credit, characteristics of an opposite tendency being, as usual, suppressed by biographers. The boys were accustomed to go at noon to the writing school, the road to which passed through the churchyard of St. Nicholas. In this churchyard Byron, with two companions, was once (Feb. 5, 1795), surprised by a sudden and fearful snowstorm. The two boys fortunately reached the writing school, and were fetched home by their maid-servants. Byron, on the other hand, did not return, and towards evening the servant of his agonised mother made her appearance at the houses of his two companions, to make enquiries after him. To her horror she found him not, and forthwith hastened, by the advice of one of the boys, to the sexton, in order with him to search the churchyard. By the gleam of the lantern they found the boy, cowering under a high gravestone, covered with snow.[1] Another time Byron, on his way from school, meeting with a boy who had insulted him, when he was unable to resent it, told him with a

[1] Such is the account of one of these two companions in *Notes and Queries*, November 29, 1862, p. 426 *et seq.* A far more probable account of this anecdote is found in the *Athenæum*, November 9, 1861, p. 618. According to this, little Byron with two companions took refuge in the kitchen of a stocking weaver, whence they were brought away in the evening. While their clothes were being dried before the fire, Byron whiled away the time by telling his companions one of the tales of the Arabian Nights.

threat that he would pay him off for it. This he did accordingly, though his opponent was supported by other boys. Returning home at full speed, and asked why he was so much out of breath, he answered that he had been beating a boy according to his promise, 'for that he was a Byron and would never belie his motto, "Trust Byron."'[1] When May Gray once took the boy to the theatre to see the 'Taming of the Shrew,' he watched the performance with silent interest; but in the scene between Catherine and Petruchio, where the following dialogue takes place:—

'*Cath.* I know it is the moon.

'*Petruch.* Nay, then, you lie—it is the blessed sun'—Geordie (as they called the child), starting from his seat, cried out boldly, 'But I say it is the moon, sir.'[2]

Mrs. Byron being evidently no friend to walking, Geordie was left pretty much to himself, and learned to love lonely walks and rambles, for which he often stole away unobserved from home. On one of these, directed, as was often the case, towards the sea-shore, he fell into a morass, whence he could not extricate himself, and where he was found only after long and anxious search. On another occasion he and a friend went for a ramble, with a pony between them on the principle of 'ride and tie.' When they came to the romantic Brig of Balgounie, which spans the Don, the old prediction occurred to Byron's memory:

> Brig of Balgounie, black's your wa':
> With a wife's ae son and a mare's ae foal
> Doun ye shall fa'.

Holding back his friend, whose turn it was to ride next, he reminded him of the verses and of the fact that they were both only sons, and that neither of them knew,

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 20.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 15.

whether the pony also might not be the only foal of a mare. Under these circumstances, he proposed to ride first over the bridge, for that only his mother would have to mourn for him, while for his friend a father also would have to lament. Byron's proposal was accepted; but, contrary to expectation, the bridge did not fall in, and the boys came therefore to the conclusion, that the pony must necessarily have either brothers or sisters.[1]

Along with his mother, Byron paid occasional visits to the country seats of relations and friends, specially to Fetteresso, the seat of his godfather Colonel Duff, formerly belonging to the Earls Marischal of Scotland. A longer residence in the Highlands, whither his mother was induced to take him in order to try the 'goat's-whey cure,' after an attack of scarlet fever, contributed powerfully to his mental development. They occupied the farmhouse of Ballatrech in the neighbourhood of Ballater on the Dee, famous for its beautiful situation and salubrious air. The house, and even the bed on which Byron is said to have slept, is still shown, and has become a place of pilgrimage for reverent and still more for irreverent Highland tourists. Here the boy found himself transported into the very heart of the beautiful romantic scenery of the Highlands. Here the Dee rushes through wild and bare crags, and here Lochin-y-gair, crowned with snow even in summer, towered aloft before the eyes of the future poet. What friend of English poetry knows not the impassioned stanzas, in which he has celebrated this mountain and the remembrance of the days which he had spent there? On a later excursion he penetrated still further, through the romantic passes of Invercauld, up to the linn of Dee, where, for the third time, he was nearly losing his life. As he was scrambling

[1] Lake, p. 25. Comp. Moore, i. 35. *Don Juan*, x. 18.

along a declivity overhanging the fall, his foot was caught in some heather and he fell, and just as he was beginning to roll down, the guide fortunately caught hold of him and pulled him up again.

From this residence in the Highlands Byron dated his love of mountainous countries.[1] Moore[2] has, indeed, remarked, that the imagination easily deceives itself by referring to an earlier period what is in reality of later growth; but yet it is certain that Byron first learned in Scotland to know those two forms of nature which most harmonised with his mind, and in which he felt himself most at home—the mountains and the sea. The Scottish Highlands became so much the more intimately blended with the recollections of childhood, as he never revisited them in after life. In the spring of 1807 he formed the plan of a tour to his old home, which, however, was not carried out. When he roamed among similar mountains in Albania and Greece, memory transported him to Morven, and at a still later period, in the second canto of 'The Island,' he paid his homage to the unforgotten mountains of the land of his home.

> Long have I roamed through lands which are not mine,
> Adored the Alp, and loved the Apennine,
> Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep
> Jove's Ida and Olympus crown the deep;
> But 'twas not all long ages' lore, nor all
> *Their* nature held me in their thrilling thrall;
> The infant rapture still survived the boy,
> And Loch-na-gar with Ida looked o'er Troy,
> Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
> And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount.
> Forgive me, Homer's universal shade!
> Forgive me, Phœbus! that my fancy strayed;
> The North and Nature taught me to adore
> Your scenes sublime, from those beloved before.

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[1] See Note to *The Island*, canto ii. 12, *Life and Works*, xiv. 321.
[2] *Life*, i. 24–26.

This, however, is the extent of the influence which Scotland exercised on the course of his development. For although he once says of himself, that he was 'half a Scot by birth and bred a whole one;'[1] although he rejoiced at all times to meet an inhabitant of the granite city, and was not averse to speak of the haunts of his childhood; although on his first expedition to Greece he was dressed in Scottish tartan, the tartan of the Gordon Clan, yet the bent of his mind and the character of his poetry are anything but Scottish. Scottish nationality is tainted with narrow and provincial elements; Byron's poetical character, on the other hand, is universal and cosmopolitan. He had no attachment to localities, and never devoted himself to the study of the history of Scotland and its romantic legends. With his strong sense of the ridiculous it could not escape him how easily Scottish provincialism degenerates into the ludicrous, and with his too common habit of rushing from one extreme to the other, it was not difficult to betray him into a rage, half serious, half playful, against Scotland. In his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' there is no lack of bitterness against the once much loved home of his childhood: and, when a young lady, on a certain occasion, incautiously remarked to him, that he had a little of the Scottish accent: 'Good God, I hope not,' he exclaimed; 'I am sure I haven't. I would rather the whole d——d country was sunk in the sea. I the Scotch accent!'[2] That Byron, however, as a child, spoke with the Scottish accent can scarcely be denied; his mother and his nurse, who was at the same time his teacher, spoke with it, like everyone else around him, and it is hardly possible that

[1] *Don Juan*, x. 17.

[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 36.

he should have entirely discarded the accent to which his ear had been accustomed from his cradle.

One more significant circumstance belonging to Byron's childhood remains to be mentioned, his love for Mary Duff when he was only eight years old, Mary being two years older. This strange phenomenon places him beside Dante, who, it is well known, fell in love in his ninth year with Beatrice at the May day Festival at Florence. Canova pretended to have fallen in love even when he was only five years old; and Alfieri sees in this almost incredible precocity a sure characteristic of genius. Mary Duff was a distant cousin of Byron, and had a younger sister Helen, who played with her doll while she herself made love with Byron. According to his own account, Byron, during this childish passion, was restless and sleepless, and tormented his mother's maid until she wrote in his name to the little object of his affections, who had been removed to her grandmother's at Banff. She was afterwards married to a wine merchant in Edinburgh, Mr. Robert Cockburn, Byron being then sixteen years old. When his mother communicated this piece of news to him, it nearly threw him, according to his own account, into convulsions, so that his mother scarcely ever ventured to return to the subject.[1]

After the death of William Byron, the grandson of the fifth lord, it was natural that the boy's thoughts should turn to his succession to the peerage; his mother had long before believed him destined for great things, especially after some village fortune-teller, who founded her prediction on the lameness of the boy, confirmed her in this belief. When, in the winter of 1797, his mother

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 27.

happened to read aloud a speech which had been delivered in the House of Commons, a friend who was present remarked to 'Geordie,' 'We shall have the pleasure, some time or other, of reading your speeches in the House;' 'I hope not'—was his answer; 'if you read any speeches of mine, it will be in the House of Lords.'[1] The day after the arrival of the news of the death of the old lord, the boy ran into his mother's room, and asked her 'whether she perceived any difference in him since he had been made a lord, as he perceived none himself.'[2] Not externally, indeed, but that 'the lame boy who lived at Aberdeen' was not unconscious of the great change which had taken place in his position, is shown by his conduct in the school. Next morning when the names of the boys were called out, and his was pronounced with the title 'Dominus' prefixed, such an impression was made on him, that he was unable to utter the usual answer 'Adsum,' and at last burst into tears.[3] Moore[4] very rightly remarks that it would have been a decided advantage for the formation of Byron's character, if he had had to wait ten years longer ere he inherited the peerage, and had continued to live in his limited circumstances and been obliged to struggle against them. The elevation of rank at his tender age acted the more prejudicially, as it did not extend to his mother, he standing above her in rank and property, while she was and continued simply Mrs. Byron. The family, i.e. mother, son, and faithful maid-servant, had now only to set out (in the autumn of 1798) for the new inheritance of Newstead. With the exception of the silver plate and linen, Mrs. Byron sold all the furniture before their departure, the proceeds of the whole amounting to less than 75*l.*; little enough for

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 29. [2] *Ibid.* i. 30. [3] *Ibid.* i. 30. [4] *Ibid.* i. 29.

the mother of a peer and a descendant of the royal house of Scotland. In what way the journey was made is not related: only Byron mentions in one of his last letters, that he recollected Loch Leven, by which they passed, 'as if it were but yesterday.'[1]

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 37.

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY.

1798–1808.

When the travellers arrived at the Newstead toll-bar, his mother, affecting ignorance, asked the woman of the toll-house to whom the park and house belonged; she answered, that Lord Byron, the owner of it, had been dead for some months. 'And who is the next heir?' asked the proud and happy mother. 'They say,' answered the woman, 'it is a little boy who lives at Aberdeen.' 'And this is he, bless him!' exclaimed the nurse, no longer able to contain herself, and turning to kiss with delight the young lord who was seated on her lap.[1]

Thus did the young lord, in his eleventh year, make his entrance into Newstead Abbey. There, everything wore a dreary and desolate look; and though Mrs. Byron had not been accustomed to luxury, she could not bring herself to make Newstead her home, but retired with her son to the neighbouring town of Nottingham, a step which was moreover rendered needful from a regard to the young peer's training both of body and mind. Byron himself, as soon as he inherited the peerage, had become a ward of the Court of Chancery, which appointed the Earl of Carlisle his guardian. This nobleman (1784–1826) was a near relation, his mother, Isabella Byron (1721–1795), being a

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 37.

sister of the fifth Lord Byron, the duellist. This lady belied in nowise the family character; she was full of talent and wit, wrote tolerable verses[1] and some pungent epigrams. In eccentricity she equalled her brother, and, like him, though without the grounds he had, secluded herself in her later years entirely from the world, in which she had shone in earlier life as one of the stars of society. Fox, to whom she was known, characterised her in a satire as

Carlisle, recluse in pride and rags;[2]

and they are said to have spoken or written yet coarser things of each other. Her son was distinguished in the world of fashion, made a figure in Parliament, and had been Viceroy of Ireland in the year 1780. He was, moreover, a wit and a poet, who soared even to the lofty [illegible] of tragedy.[3] His tragedy, 'The Father's Revenge,' [illegible] Dr. Johnson, met with some [illegible]. It is well known that Byron, who, not [illegible] believed himself neglected by his guardian, so harshly [illegible] icised his poetry in the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' that he endeavoured, at a later period, to make every reparation for the wrong he had been guilty of. To him he dedicated the second edition of 'The Hours of Idleness,' as his obliged ward and affectionate kinsman. The two men were evidently, both poetically and otherwise, of minds too much opposed as not mutually to repel each other. The Earl of Carlisle appears at first to have little concerned

[1] One or two in Pearch's Collection are ascribed to her; she composed also a small treatise on Education.

[2] Galt's *Life of Byron*, chap. iv. p. 33.

[3] He was the author of the following works:—*Poems*, 1773; *Unite or Fall*, 1798; *The Step-mother*, a tragedy, 1800; *Tragedies and Poems*, 1801; *Verses on the Death of Lord Nelson*, 1806; *Thoughts on the Stage*.

himself in the education of his ward, but to have entrusted it to his mother, who directed her attention chiefly to the cure of the deformed foot. She, like Scott's parents, who hoped to succeed in removing his lameness by the so-called earth-bath of Dr. Graham, applied to a quack of the name of Lavender [1] with a like object. This man, rubbing the foot with oil, forcibly twisted it round, and then screwed it up in a wooden machine, causing of course dreadful suffering to the poor boy.[2]

That he might lose no ground in the studies of the school, Byron received instruction in Latin from a respectable teacher of the name of Rogers,[3] who read Virgil and Cicero with him—rather prematurely, certainly, for a boy of eleven years of age. Teacher and scholar were, however, mutually satisfied. Mr. Rogers, remarking one day the pain which Byron endured with his foot in the machine while he was teaching him, could not withhold his sympathy: 'It makes me uncomfortable, my Lord, to see you sitting there in such pain, as I know you must be suffering'—'Never mind, Mr. Rogers,' answered the boy, 'you shall not see any signs of it in *me*.'[4] Of him, as of almost all his masters, he preserved a respectful and kindly recollection, while for his tormentor Lavender he had nothing but hatred, and delighted to practise jokes upon him. Thus on one occasion writing down all the letters of the alphabet and putting them together at random in the form of words, he asked the pompous ignoramus what language it was: 'Italian,' he answered with his

[1] It is said that Lavender often sent the boy across the street for a jug of beer. (*Notes and Queries*, 4th series, vol. iii. pp. 284, 418, 561.) The thing seems scarcely credible.

[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 41.

[3] According to *Notes and Queries*, 4th series, vol. iii. p. 561, Rogers was an American royalist, who enjoyed a pension from the English Government.

[4] Moore's *Life*, i. 41.

accustomed confidence, and brought down on himself a shout of triumphant laughter from the boy.[1]

When Mrs. Byron herself could no longer doubt that Lavender's so-called cure was nothing but the infliction of useless torture, she was advised by Lord Carlisle to consult the celebrated Dr. Baillie in London, brother of the still more celebrated dramatic poetess Joanna Baillie. This advice was probably in harmony with the personal wishes and inclinations of Mrs. Byron, and led to her settling in London in the summer of 1799, where she took a house in Sloane Terrace, and sent her son to the private school of a Dr. Glennie in Dulwich, one of the most charming districts to the south of London. Her personal resources, which the young Lord, as long as he was a minor, could not from his own means augment, received about this time a seasonable addition, inasmuch as she obtained (July 5, 1799), a pension of 300*l.* a year on the Civil List; who interceded for her with the king, or on what grounds the king granted it, is however unknown.[2] About this time also the faithful nurse of the child, May Gray, returned to her home in Scotland, where she was married, and died about the year 1827. In parting with her Byron gave her his watch, the first he had possessed, and a full-length miniature of himself (painted by Kay of Edinburgh in 1795), which represented him standing with a bow and arrow in his hand and a profusion of hair falling over his shoulders.[3] Some years afterwards Byron wrote to tell her, among other matters, that his foot was so far restored that he was able to put on a common boot—'an event for which he had long anxiously wished, and which he was sure would give her great pleasure.'[4]

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 41.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 43.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 55.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 56.

It was in many respects a happy thing for Byron that he was now separated from his mother; already she began to appear to him under a ludicrous aspect. Her outbursts of rage no longer made him afraid, but caused him much amusement.[1] When with her short and corpulent figure she ran round the room to catch him and punish him, he managed, in spite of his lameness, always to escape from her, and laughed at her rage. Of her coarse invectives one only left a sting, which was never eradicated; in one of her fits of passion she called him 'a lame brat,' although to her he believed himself indebted for this deformity.[2] These outbursts of temper she displayed even in Dr. Glennie's school, who once heard one of his pupils say to Byron: 'Byron, your mother is a fool.' 'I know it' said he gloomily.[3] Dr. Glennie, himself a Scotchman, gave Moore the following description of Mrs. Byron: 'Mrs. Byron was a total stranger to English society and English manners; with an exterior far from prepossessing, an understanding where nature had not been more bountiful, a mind almost wholly without cultivation, and the peculiarities of northern opinions, northern habits, and northern accent, I trust I do no great prejudice to the memory of my country-woman, if I say Mrs. Byron was not a Madame de Lambert, endowed with powers to retrieve the fortune and form the character and manners of a young nobleman, her son.'[4] In a word, she was deficient in mental culture, and even in mere external refinement: there was something even childish in her character. If Disraeli may be regarded as an authority, Mrs. Byron was wont to pour out her heart to everyone on the enormities of her husband, on her miserable condition, on the fifth Lord Byron, who had brought

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 38.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 38.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 48.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 47.

Newstead to such a ruinous condition, and generally on everything which vexed and annoyed her. He hints, too, that she was partial to strong drinks, especially to whisky; and a letter of Byron to his mother, hereafter to be cited, appears to corroborate this. The worst was that Mrs. Byron incessantly interfered with the instruction and education of the boy; for not only from Saturday to Monday was Geordie kept at home, but often for the whole week; and in all the complaints which were made, she appears always to have taken the part of the pupil against the masters. Thus all the efforts of Dr. Glennie and Lord Carlisle were continually thwarted, so that the latter withdrew more and more from all concern for his ward, and at last declared that he would have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron, and that Dr. Glennie must manage her as he could.[1] Young Byron himself, tortured by a new machine applied to his foot, and enjoined to abstain as much as possible from all bodily exertion, had to devote all his powers to accommodate himself to the course of instruction pursued in English schools, which differed from the system followed at Aberdeen, and in some measure to fill up the gaps. Dr. Glennie, who appears to have taken a fatherly interest in him, testifies that he showed diligence and zeal; that he was playful and good-humoured, and beloved by his companions; only that his aristocratic pride frequently excited the ridicule of the other boys, and gained for him the nickname of the old English Baron,[2] in allusion to the celebrated romance of that name by Miss Clara Reeve (1777); that his reading in history and poetry was far beyond the usual standard of his age, especially that he had an intimate acquaintance with the historical writings of the Bible and delighted to converse on them. Dr. Glennie believed that Byron

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 48.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 70.

had read more than once from beginning to end a collection of English poets from Chaucer to Churchill, which he found in the Doctor's library.[1] As Byron, on account of the medical treatment to which he was subjected, slept in the Doctor's study, he had an unusually good opportunity to use his books, openly as well as secretly. Notwithstanding these favourable circumstances, Mrs. Byron was by no means satisfied with the progress of her son, and in spite of the assurances of Dr. Glennie that he was not yet sufficiently prepared, she insisted on sending him to one of the great public schools. It is possible that Dr. Glennie's school was not adequate to all the requirements which might be made. We have only his own account of Byron's residence with him, and it is remarkable that Byron never, for good or evil, makes mention of him; but substantially the right appears to have been on Dr. Glennie's side. However this may be, it is enough that Byron, with the consent of his guardian, in the summer of 1801 was sent to Harrow.

Before we accompany him further, we must dwell on one circumstance belonging to this stage of his boyhood. Byron's first attempt in poetry was, according to the account of May Gray, an epigram, which he made at Newstead on an old lady who paid frequent visits to his mother, and who made herself disagreeable to him by her strange opinions and her unpleasing manners. This lady, among other views, entertaining the notion that the soul, after death, took its flight to the moon, he at last vented his anger against her in the following lines, which he delighted to repeat over and over again:—

> In Nottingham county there lives at Swan Green
> As curst an old lady as ever was seen:
> And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
> She firmly believes she will go to the moon.[2]

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 42.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 42.

These early verses suggest three remarks: that the first lisping attempt of Byron's muse connects itself with Newstead; that it was of a satirical character; and that we are indebted for the knowledge of it to his nurse instead of to his mother. Byron aspired, however, to far higher aims with extraordinary rapidity; when only in his thirteenth year, he made an attempt at a play, 'Ulrich and Ilvina,' which fortunately he soon burnt. About the same time lyrical efforts, more appropriate to his age, strove to find utterance. During his residence at Dulwich (1800) he fell in love with his cousin, Margaret Parker, the daughter and grand-daughter of two admirals of this name, and this attachment, to use his own words,[1] led to his first dash into poetry. The verses which she inspired him to write, he had long ago (he says) forgotten—perhaps they deserved no better fate—but the dark eyes, the long eyelashes, the completely Greek cast of the face and figure of the girl, then in her twelfth or thirteenth year, appear never to have passed from his memory. 'She was,' he writes, 'of a transparent beauty. She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace.'[2] Like Mary Duff, she had a sister, Augusta, who by many persons was thought still more beautiful. Both sisters died not long afterwards of consumption, the fatal issue of which, in Margaret's case, was accelerated by a fall which injured her spine. The first poem in the 'Hours of Idleness,' bearing the date 1802, is dedicated to the memory of Margaret.

Just before going to Harrow, Byron accompanied his mother on a tour to Cheltenham, where the Malvern Hills, and especially the sunsets on them, produced a deep effect upon his mind.[3] Here his superstitious mother went with him to a fortune-teller, who predicted that

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 52. [2] *Ibid.* i. 53. [3] *Ibid.* i. 25.

before coming of age he would run some danger of being poisoned, and that he would be twice married—the second time to a foreign lady.[1]

Harrow, one of the great English public schools, stood at that time high in the favour of the aristocracy, a circumstance which, combined with its short distance from London, certainly helped to influence and determine the choice of Mrs. Byron. Harrow, moreover, possessed in the person of Dr. Joseph Drury a distinguished headmaster,[2] whose merits in the education of Byron were truly great, and who, therefore, enjoyed his life-long honour and respect. His pupil described Dr. Drury as a perfect gentleman, of the mildest disposition, and utterly free from pedantry.[3] When Byron was consigned to his care by Mr. Hanson, the family solicitor, with the remark that his education had been neglected, but that he possessed some cleverness, Dr. Drury attempted to find out from the youth himself some particulars concerning the direction of his previous studies, the persons with whom he had associated, and his inclinations, but soon discovered that a wild mountain colt had been committed to his management, and became convinced that his new pupil might be led by a silken string, rather than by a cable.[4] Byron, already accustomed to habits of com-

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 56.

[2] Joseph Drury, born in London in the year 1750, was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. Before he had completed his twentieth year he was appointed one of the under-masters at Harrow, of which school he was head-master from the year 1784 to the year 1805. He then retired to Cockwood in Devonshire, where he devoted himself to the improvement of agriculture, and died in January 1834. A memorial of him has been placed in the Church at Harrow. Without achieving any distinction in literature, he left behind him the reputation of an excellent teacher, pre-eminently fitted and endowed for his position.

[3] See note to the 'Hours of Idleness,' *Works*, vii. p. 147.

[4] Moore's *Life*, i. 58

mand, showed himself refractory to all school discipline and subordination. His natural shyness, also, was increased by the sudden transition from a quiet private school to the vigorous life of a great public institution. His position with regard to the other boys of the school was so far difficult, that they knew he came from circles enjoying no distinction in the fashionable world, and that his fortune little corresponded with his rank. To this was superadded the proud dread, lest, through his insufficient preparation, he might be placed below younger and smaller boys. Dr. Drury calmed his apprehensions by assuring him, that his place in the school should not be fixed, until by his diligence he might rank with those of his own age. He committed him to the care of one of the masters as his tutor, and did everything in his power to accustom him to the ways of the school. Notwithstanding this, Byron confesses that for the first year and a half he hated Harrow;[1] that only in the two last years of his residence was he reconciled to it, after he had risen to be a leader, not so much by his proficiency in the studies of the school, as by his character, i.e. his courage and his independence, as well as by excelling in all games and sports, and from being a very unpopular, had become a very popular boy. To the elder and bigger boys he was undaunted and brave, to the younger kind and amiable, often playing the part of their protector. Against wrong and pretension his attitude was bold and decisive. His intellectual capacity naturally could be hid neither from the pupils nor from the masters, and Dr. Drury was among the first who recognised it. After he had been some time at Harrow, Lord Carlisle, considering it his duty to make some

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 57.

enquiries about him, desired to see Dr. Drury in town:—'I waited on his Lordship,' says Dr. Drury; 'his object was to inform me of Lord Byron's expectations of property when he came of age, which he represented as contracted, and to enquire concerning his abilities. On the former circumstance I made no remark: as to the latter I replied: He has talents, my Lord, which will add lustre to his rank. "Indeed!" said his Lordship, with a degree of surprise, that, according to my feeling, did not express in it all the satisfaction I expected.'[1]

Byron's high estimation of his master was, under such circumstances, very natural. When at a later period they met in London, the master reproachfully asked his former pupil, now become famous, why he had never sent his poems to him: 'Because,' said Byron, 'you are the only man I never wish to read them;' but in a few moments he added, 'What do you think of "The Corsair"?'[2] In one of his journals he says, 'Dr. Drury was the best, the kindest (and yet strict too) friend I ever had, and I look on him still as a father.'[3] In another place—in a note to 'Childe Harold,' iv. 75—he speaks of his preceptor as the best and worthiest friend he ever possessed, 'whose warnings I have remembered but too well though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsels I have but followed when I have done well or wisely. If ever this imperfect record of my feelings towards him should reach his eyes, let it remind him of one who never thinks of him but with gratitude and veneration, of one who would more gladly boast of having been his pupil, if by more closely following his injunctions he could reflect any honour on his instruction.'

To this beautiful relation between master and pupil,

[1] Dr. Drury's Recollections, Moore's *Life*, i. 58, 59.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 69. [3] *Ibid.* i. 66.

Byron's relation to Dr. Butler presented, alas! a complete contrast. In the 'Hours of Idleness,' which are rich in allusions to the poet's school and university life, he is described under the character of Pomposus, as 'of narrow brain yet of a narrower soul,' as vain and conceited, pedantic and destitute of social virtues, and the decay of the school is reckoned from his assumption of the head-mastership.[1] In maturer years, indeed, Byron deplored this as well as many other attacks. A reconciliation with Dr. Butler, which he intended to commemorate in a later edition of the 'Hours of Idleness,' (never, however, called for,) took place in the year 1809, before he departed on his travels to Greece. When Dr. Butler, according to custom, invited the pupils of the higher classes to dinner at the end of the term, it is said that Byron, contrary to all rules of propriety, refused the invitation, and when interrogated by Dr. Butler as to the grounds of this strange conduct, is also said to have given him the less courteous than manly and sincere answer: 'If you, Dr. Butler, should happen to come into my neighbourhood, when I was staying at Newstead, I certainly should not ask you to dine with me, and therefore feel that I ought not to dine with you.'[2] Dr. Butler, indeed, assured Moore[3] that this anecdote, communicated by a school companion of the poet, had very little foundation in fact; but the qualification 'very little' proves that the story is, notwithstanding, not without some ground. On another occasion, when Byron to the great vexation of Dr. Butler, tore down all the gratings from the window of the hall in the doctor's house, he answered, on being asked the reason for his conduct, 'Because they darkened

[1] 'On a Change of Masters at a great Public School,' *Works*, vii. 37.
[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 87, 88.
[3] Note in 2nd edition of Moore's *Life*, i. 88.

the hall.'[1] His conduct was, however, not always in opposition nor destructive, as the following anecdote, omitted in Moore's narrative, will show. In one of their rebellious moods the boys, wanting to set fire to a class-room, Byron restrained them from the attempt by pointing to the names, written and carved on the desks, of their fathers and grandfathers who had become the ornaments of their country.[2]

How under such circumstances it would fare with Byron's progress and studies, may easily be conceived. For a mind of his stamp, Harrow, with its almost exclusive devotion to the dead languages, was not the appropriate place of culture: the too predominant classical element failed to interest him; and again he was more or less left to his own self-instruction. Horace, by continual repetition, was made odious to him for his whole life. It is the old story exemplified in Shakspeare, Scott, and many others: Byron learnt little Latin and less Greek. Learning and poetry are only to a certain extent compatible with each other in the same mind; either attaining perfection excludes the other. The poetical translations from Greek and Latin poets in the 'Hours of Idleness' prove nothing to the contrary; they are mere school exercises. In his Greek school-books the easiest Greek words are underlined with their English equivalents, as if he were not very sure of their meaning.[3] He was generally regarded by all his masters as an idle boy, and, as he himself says, 'no one had the least notion that I should subside into poetry.'[4] It was the talent of an orator which was ascribed to him. Dr. Drury[5] saw in him the future distinguished parliamentary speaker. This ex-

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 87.
[2] Medwin's *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 85, 2nd edition. 1824.
[3] Moore's *Life*, i. 88. [4] Moore's *Life*, i. 62. [5] *Ibid.*

pectation was chiefly founded on the fact, that he chose for his recitations the most passionate pieces, as, for instance, Lear's address to the storm.[1] Harrow, like the other public schools, and even the universities, bestowed little attention on that which would have had pre-eminent attractions for Byron—the modern languages and their literature, the English language not excepted. History and geography were almost entirely left to private diligence. Thus it was that Byron never acquired a facility in speaking French, a defect which in later life he often enough had occasion to deplore. Of German he learnt still less, and the little he acquired he soon forgot. On the other hand, works of history, of biography, of poetry and even of philosophy, he read, both during his school and university days, in profusion, and with his fine memory not without lasting benefit; but it was a strange medley without plan or purpose.[2] Besides Little's (Moore's) poems,[3] we find in this mass of reading Lord Strangford's Camoens,[4] and the autobiography of Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, the father of the English Deists. He was also, of course, a great reader of novels. The favourite place, to which he was wont to retire with his books and his thoughts, was a venerable elm near a tomb in the churchyard, which by the boys was generally called Byron's tomb, and under this name is shown to this day.[5] From thence he enjoyed a view unique in its way which the situation of Harrow, on one of the most considerable heights which surround the basin of London, afforded

[1] Moore's *Life*, vii. 50. [2] *Ibid.* i. 140 *et seq.*

[3] In a letter to Moore (June 9, 1820) he thus humorously speaks of the effects of these poems: 'I have just been turning over Little, which I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth summer. Heigho! I believe all the mischief I have ever done, or sung, has been owing to that confounded book of yours.' (iv. 326.)

[4] *Ibid.* i. 119. [5] 'Lines written beneath an Elm,' *Works*, vii. 187.

him. He saw, indeed, on the bounds of the horizon, no mountains in the blue distance, no lakes sparkling, no ships dancing on the distant waves of the sea: but before him the green landscape stretched in lovely undulations like a garden, and the battlements and towers of Windsor shone in the evening light, and, veiled in perpetual mist, the domes and spires of London uprose as from a sea, like phantom forms of supernatural magnitude from out the mirage of the desert. In this churchyard the young poet desired to be committed to his mother earth; and when in the year 1822 his natural daughter Allegra died, he caused her to be buried there.

His Harrow life was for Byron the period of enthusiastic youthful friendships. 'My school friendships,' he says himself in his Journal of 1821, 'were with me *passions*, for I was always violent.'[1] This may be explained from his natural disposition, from his having no brothers, and from want of the discipline of a well-regulated family; only here he found objects for his affections. To this passion Byron gave the most eloquent expression in his youthful poem (first printed in the year 1832) 'L'Amitié est l'Amour sans Ailes,'[2] which, from some unknown motives, he did not admit into the 'Hours of Idleness,' but in which he has immortalised all the friends of his youth. Of these the greater number were younger than Byron, but he loved to play the part of their protector and Mentor, and to regard them, to a certain extent, as his satellites. With one or two exceptions they all belonged to the aristocracy, and save Robert Peel none of them afterwards attained distinction; several of them died prematurely in early life. Byron, indeed, once said, that almost all his school companions had become famous, but he had formed no friendships there with those whom he cites in proof of this

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 63. [2] *Ibid.* vii. 161.

assertion. His most intimate friends were Wildman, who afterwards became the proprietor of Newstead, the Duke of Dorset, who was his fag, Tatersall, Wingfield, Lord Delaware, Lord Clare, and Sir Robert Peel. His friendship with Lord Clare was one of the earliest, the most tender and enduring. 'I never hear the word "Clare,"' he writes in his Journal of 1821, 'without a beating of the heart even now, and I write it with the feelings of 1803-4-5 *ad infinitum*.'[1] The accidental meeting of the two friends in the year 1821, on the road between Imola and Bologna, profoundly agitated both, and transported them to the happy days of their youth. His relations with Peel, who was born in the same year with himself, Byron has described in the following words: 'We were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend. There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all, masters and scholars, and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor I was reckoned at least his equal; as a schoolboy out of school I was always in scrapes, and he never; and in school he always knew his lesson, and I rarely. But when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history, &c., I think I was his superior, as well as of most boys of my standing.'[2] When Peel was once being unmercifully beaten by an older boy, who claimed the right to fag little Peel, Byron ventured to interrupt the tormentor with the question, how many stripes he meant to inflict? 'Why?' returned he, 'you little rascal, what is that to you?' 'Because, if you please,' said Byron, holding out his arm, 'I would take half.'[3] In like manner to William Harness,[4] suffering from a severe illness, and lame like himself, he offered his protection with

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 63.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 62.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 69.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 71.

these words: 'Harness, if anyone bullies you, tell me, and I'll thrash him if I can.'[1]

But Byron was not content with the passion of friendship, the 'Amour sans ailes,' he became the slave of 'friendship with wings.' In Aberdeen it was Mary Duff, with whom he played, in Dulwich it was Margaret Parker, who kindled in him the spark of poetry, in Harrow it was Mary Ann Chaworth—and her he hoped to make his bride. So far the gradation was very natural; and of all his love affairs that with Miss Chaworth most enlists our sympathy. After another visit to Bath in the autumn of 1802, in which she was accompanied by her son, Mrs. Byron had settled at Nottingham, Newstead, at that time, having been let to Lord Grey de Ruthen. Here with his mother Byron spent the summer holidays of the following year (1803). He was, however, so attracted by Newstead, that he almost daily wandered thither, and thankfully accepted the offer made to him by Lord Grey of a room, where he might pass the night whenever he chose. From Newstead he paid visits to the Chaworth family at Annesley, to whom he had before been introduced in London, and here learned to know and to love the young heiress, Mary Ann Chaworth. Miss Chaworth's father had died a short time before, and the mother is said to have favoured Byron. The young lady was equally endowed with amiability of character and personal charms, and was now in her eighteenth year, while Byron was in his sixteenth. Although an apart-

[1] Harness, four years younger than Byron, died Nov. 1869: he became a clergyman in London and published, among other works, *The Connection of Christianity with Human Happiness*, 2 vols. London, 1823; and *Parochial Sermons*, 1838. He wrote also some dramas and poems. Henry Crabb Robinson (*Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, iii. 212) characterises him thus: 'A clergyman with Oxford propensities, and a worshipper of the heathen muses as well as the Christian graces.' Harness published also a variorum edition of Shakespeare in 8 vols. 1825. See *Athenæum*, Nov. 20, 1869, p. 663; Nov. 27, 1869, p. 701 *et seq.*

ment was offered to the youth at Annesley, he at first returned every evening to Newstead; he was afraid, he said jestingly, of the family pictures in Annesley Hall, particularly of the portrait of the Mr. Chaworth who had been killed in the duel. Love for the living, however, rapidly overcame his dread of the dead; and he soon remained to pass the night at the house of the object of his love: a ghost, he again playfully asserted, had met him on the way home, and he dreaded ghosts even more than he did the ancestors. He even accompanied the family to the watering-place of Matlock, and to the romantic Castleton, famous for its caverns (both in Derbyshire); and Matlock furnished a scene which presents a striking similarity with one from Scott's life. There was a ball at Matlock, at which Miss Chaworth shone as a dancer, whilst her lame worshipper was obliged to look on in all the torture of jealousy, and had not even the satisfaction, which Scott had, of leading his fair one in to supper. At Annesley he spent his time in riding with Miss Chaworth and her cousin, or in firing at an old door—or he sat in idle reverie playing with his handkerchief beside her, whom he called his 'bright morning star of Annesley.' He was delighted when she sang to him the pensive music of popular melodies, for like all poets he loved the simple pathos of such airs. Six weeks the sweet dream lasted, but these six weeks sufficed to stamp their impress on the whole course of his life. Contradicting his own saying:—

> Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
> 'Tis woman's whole existence;[1]

he never found the strength of a man to shake off the past, but loved to revel in the old memories the more painful they became. Washington Irving, indeed, is convinced

[1] *Don Juan*, i. 194.

that he intentionally brooded over the past, because he knew that this intoxication of memory was for him a mine of poetry; and certainly the 'Dream,' in which he has described his relation to Miss Chaworth, and which he wrote in the year 1816 at Diodati amid a flood of tears, is among the most touching productions not only of Byron's muse but of all lyrical poetry. The dream came to an end, in a way most painful to Byron. One evening he heard—or was it some tale-bearer who reported it?—Miss Chaworth saying to her maid: 'Do you think I could care anything for that lame boy?'[1] Like the sting of a scorpion, the mention of his lameness pierced his heart, and spite of the lateness of the hour, he rushed out of the house, not caring whither he went, and never stopped till he found himself at Newstead. He discovered that at the best Miss Chaworth cherished only a sister's feeling for him. In the nature of things it could not be otherwise; Miss Chaworth was then in the first stage and bloom of womanhood, Byron in the last and most unpleasing of boyhood, and spite of the apparently small difference of years, no bridge leads over this abyss. Byron at a later period flattered himself that a marriage with her would have joined together two neighbouring properties, have extinguished old family feuds, and given to his whole life a different and a happier turn: but speculation on possibilities of this nature must naturally be barren and fruitless. Notwithstanding his rushing away from her house in the night, the pain of a formal farewell was not spared him. This took place the year after on a hill at Annesley, which he describes in the 'Dream' as 'crowned with a peculiar diadem.'[2] 'The next time I

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 83.

[2] The 'diadem of trees' has long ceased to stand; in a fit of jealous anger at the poem which Byron addressed to his wife, Mr. Musters
' lace with the ground.

see you'—were his last words to her—'I suppose you will be Mrs. Chaworth.' 'I hope so' was her answer.[1] Immediately after this holiday dream, she was betrothed to Mr. John Musters, a handsome man, distinguished in the sporting world—she is said to have seen him for the first time at the head of a fox-hunt—and the heir of Colwick Hall, close to Nottingham. The marriage took place in August, 1805, Mr. Musters assuming the name of Chaworth, which, however, he bore for a few years only. A person who was present when the intelligence was broken to him thus describes the scene: 'Byron,' said his mother, 'I have some news for you.'—'Well, what is it?' 'Take out your handkerchief, for you will want it.' 'Nonsense.' 'Take out your handkerchief, I say.' He did so, to humour her. 'Miss Chaworth is married.' He hurried his handkerchief into his pocket, saying, with an affected indifference, 'Is that all?' though a deadly paleness overspread his countenance. To his mother's remark, 'Why I expected you would have been plunged in grief!' he made no reply, and turned the conversation to another subject.[2] Had his mother treated the matter more gravely and worthily, he would not have shut up his feelings so defiantly in his own breast; and in this example we see very plainly how the heartlessness of those to whom he was allied by the ties of nature influenced his character, and how the same heartlessness drove him to poetry. Henceforward the Muse became his confidant, and took the place of mother and of mistress. Byron saw Mrs. Chaworth in the year 1808, when he was invited to dine at Annesley by her husband. After dinner, on her little daughter being introduced, he started involuntarily and with the greatest difficulty concealed his emotion. On his departure for

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 85.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 86.

Greece in the following year his thoughts unbidden returned to her, and he took farewell of her in several poems.

Mrs. Chaworth's future life was still more melancholy than Byron's. Her husband was destitute of all high culture: his favourite and almost his only occupation was sport, especially fox-hunting, and his conduct to his wife was unkind and unfeeling. 'Domestic sorrows,' says Washington Irving, 'long preyed in secret on her heart.' In 'The Dream' it is said of her:—

> Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
> The settled shadow of an inward strife,
> And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
> As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.

The more painfully must she have felt her position, as she saw the growth of Byron's fame, casting its beams over the world. Hours, surely, must have come over her, when she would have been proud to call 'the lame boy' her own. It is said that at a later period she asked to meet Byron, who, however, following his sister's advice, declined the request.[1] At last she separated from her husband, fell into bad health, and 'the bright Morning Star of Annesley' passed under the cloud of mental darkness. In the beginning of 1832, when the rioters of Nottingham plundered Colwick Hall, she and her daughter were obliged to conceal themselves in the shrubbery. Fear and the consequent exposure so shattered her, that she succumbed to her sufferings in February 1832, at Wiverton Hall near Nottingham. Her life too by Byron's side how different might it have become, and perhaps happier far! Her husband died in 1850, and after his death every memento of his wife and her ancient family was sold by public auction.

[1] See Byron's own statement in his letter to Monsieur J. J. Coulmann.

A few weeks after Miss Chaworth's marriage Byron went to the University of Cambridge (October 1805), where he became a member of Trinity College. The advice of Dr. Drury, who belonged to the same college, probably led to this step. Byron's own wishes leaned towards Oxford, and he freely vented his indignation against Cambridge, which had thus been forced on him. He escaped from the University as often as he could, so that it is very difficult to form a connected notion of his outer and inner college life. In one of his rank and social position, the study of any special science qualifying him for a profession would not of course be considered. This is not, indeed, the principle or purpose of the English universities, which are but the termination and completion of the liberal education which befits an English gentleman. Byron's mind, with its universal tendencies, could never be attracted by either of the two centres, classics and mathematics, round which, even to the present hour, the studies of Cambridge revolve; on the contrary, in the satire 'Granta'—one of the feeblest pieces, indeed, in the 'Hours of Idleness'—he repelled these studies with disdain, as useless knowledge. He refused to be constrained to work according to any fixed and uniform scheme; the free *universitas litterarum* of our German universities would have been more in harmony with his nature. The intellectual nourishment, which would have harmonised with his inclinations and abilities, was precisely that which was never offered to him—philosophy, political history, the history of literature, æsthetics, poetry, &c. These studies, the glory of the German universities, play a lamentably subordinate part, even to this day, at the English universities. These institutions have been condemned by the greatest minds of England herself, and English national literature stands for the most part beyond the

academic circle, if not in an attitude of hostility to it. The warmth of enthusiasm never possessed his spirit at Cambridge, which could there find no stay, outward or inward. Without aim or purpose, he divided his university years between the pedantic learning of Cambridge, the fashionable follies of the great city, and the provincial retirement of Southwell. These were years of leisure or idleness, the only visible fruits of which were the 'Hours of Idleness.'

From these circumstances may be explained the paucity of the notices of Byron's academical life and doings. Of the professors a few only are incidentally mentioned. The master of the college was Dr. William Lort Mansell, appointed to that post in 1798; he afterwards became (1808) Bishop of Bristol, and died in 1820. Though in early life celebrated as a wit and man of the world, he yet discharged his duties with ability and dignity, and Byron could not refuse him his respect.[1] The students, and among them Byron's friend Matthews, of whom we shall speak immediately, often played tricks at his expense: they awoke him at night by hideous noises under his bedroom, and when he appeared at the window, foaming with rage and crying out, 'I know you, gentlemen, I know you,' they answered him profanely using his christian name: 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lort—good Lort, deliver us.' Byron's tutor in college was the Rev. George Tavell, who zealously but vainly endeavoured to put a stop to his excesses.[2] To Professor Hailstone, Byron always showed the greatest courtesy, while of the celebrated Hellenist, Porson, he draws, as he could not but do, a revolting picture.[3] Instruction he gained neither from the one nor from the other. With his innate shyness Byron did not at first feel himself at home among the students: one

[1] See *Hours of Idleness*, vii. 94.
[2] *Imitations from Horace*, ix. 65.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 85.

friend only he had brought with him from Harrow, Noel Long,[1] who was also a member of Trinity College and his companion and rival in all sports and amusements. Afterwards a second school companion, William Harness, came from Harrow. In the choice of his associates he was no longer guided exclusively by his aristocratic tendencies; intellectual accomplishments also determined his choice. Thus he formed an enthusiastic friendship with a chorister of the name of Eddlestone, a delicate youth in humble circumstances, who, as usual with his friends, was two years younger than himself; a cornelian, which he had received as a present from him, he valued and preserved as a kind of amulet.[2]

Without regard to the order of time, which is not to be ascertained, in which Byron came first in contact with them, the most prominent members of his Cambridge circle may here at once be mentioned,—Matthews, Davies, Hodgson, Bankes, and Hobhouse. Charles Skinner Matthews is described, specially by the prejudiced Dallas,[3] as a rank atheist, who caused the ruin of Byron's soul, and whose early death—he was drowned while bathing in the Cam, August 2, 1811—was regarded by him as a manifest judgment. But in truth he was not only an amiable man, but a man of distinguished abilities, of great promise, and of extraordinary wit and humour, to whom Byron looked up as he did to no other of his friends, and who undoubtedly exercised no inconsiderable influence over him. To Byron's heart Scrope Berdmore Davies probably stood nearer than Matthews. From him Byron sought consolation, when he felt himself utterly desolate

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 94.

[2] See *Hours of Idleness*, vii. 99. See also *Childe Harold*, ii. 9, viii. 70.

[3] *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron*, p. 325. London, 1824.

and bowed down by the almost simultaneous death of his mother and their common friend Matthews. 'Come to me, Scrope, I am almost desolate—left almost alone in the world. I had but you and Hobhouse and Matthews, and let me enjoy the survivors whilst I can.'[1] Davies also relieved him by a loan of 4,800*l.*, which Byron repaid in the year 1814. To him 'Parisina' was dedicated, in the year 1816. Though obliged to borrow for his own necessities, Byron was nevertheless generous to others, and at the same period, to a third friend, Francis Hodgson, he repeatedly made most liberal advances. Hodgson, to whom several of his poems are addressed, afterwards attained a respectable position in literature, and died as Provost of Eton in the year 1852. William Bankes was, like Byron, a member of Trinity College. Byron highly esteemed him, and while in Italy maintained a correspondence with him. Returning from his great scientific travels, Bankes paid him a visit at Ravenna. Lastly, John Cam Hobhouse was, as is well known, on several occasions Byron's travelling companion, and his description of their common pilgrimage[2] is still held in much respect as a work abounding in peculiar merit. He also belonged to Trinity College. At a later period he was Byron's best man at his marriage and the executor of his will. To him the 'Siege of Corinth' and the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' are inscribed. According to Medwin,[3] Byron's friendship with him, like that with Moore, originated in a contemplated duel. So much Byron himself confirms,

[1] Letter to S. Davies, Moore's *Life*, ii. 39.

[2] *Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey with Lord Byron*, third edition, 2 vols. 1856.

[3] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 18. [Lord Byron was never concerned in a duel in his life, either as second or principal. He was once *rather near* fighting a duel, and that was with an officer of the staff of General Oakes, at Malta.—Hobhouse in the *West. Review*, January 1815, p 21.]

that Hobhouse hated him for two years, because he wore a white hat and a grey coat and rode a grey horse.[1] Their friendship, moreover, was no passing youthful intoxication, but ripened into an intimate life-long union, firmly based in mutual respect. Next to Moore there was no one, in the true sense of the word, more Byron's friend than Hobhouse, although Byron complained to Lady Blessington that Hobhouse, too often, spoke the unvarnished truth to him, a point on which Byron was, or became, extremely sensitive.[2] How affecting is the description which the Countess Guiccioli gives of the meeting of the friends at Pisa![3] it is the counterpart to the scene with Lord Clare.

Byron has the reputation of having spent his time at Cambridge in a dissipated and licentious manner. The greater part of this ill repute he owes to himself, from the intentionally exaggerated description he ever gives of his youthful follies and excesses. We shall often have occasion to notice the zest, arising partly from vanity, partly from bitterness, with which he loves to paint himself in the darkest colours. To this also must be superadded his undisguised antipathy to all conditions and surroundings which seemed to thwart him there, the love of making himself remarkable, the family headstrong character which he inherited, and the want of the discipline of domestic life, and of refined society, especially of women. He was not, however, at Cambridge at least, either licentious or vicious, godless or wicked. Rather he was eccentric, but not morally worse than the majority of those young men who, during their student life, according to the English proverb, 'sow their wild oats.' He did not walk in the

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 182. [2] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 93.
[3] See Moore's *Life*, v. 360; *Edinburgh Review*, No. cclxxii. p. 294 (April, 1871).

customary rut, but went his own way; a transgression which is never forgiven by those narrow minds who regard the keeping of the beaten track as the highest duty and *conditio sine qud non* of the respectable man. Even at this early period Byron showed his determined opposition to the theological, not to say priestly, spirit which predominates at the English Universities. Unable, under such circumstances, to develope the energy of his nature and his intellectual ambition, he continued to read only in the most desultory manner; he devoted himself with the utmost vehemence to all athletic exercises. To distinguish himself in riding, swimming, and diving, in shooting, boxing, and cricket, was, in his estimation, the highest and most desirable accomplishment of youth. Drinking, too, and perhaps play, he considered a constituent portion of these manly diversions. In riding he is said at first to have made no proficiency, and Moore[1] indeed doubts whether he ever acquired any special dexterity in it, a surmise which Byron himself seems to confirm in a letter to Miss Pigot.[2] In Southwell he is said not to have known his own horses; as they once passed by his window he praised their great beauty and expressed a desire to buy them.[3] In shooting at a mark he greatly excelled. In diving he was the rival of his friend Long; they were wont to practise their art in a place where the Cam is fourteen feet deep, and, from its by no means crystal waters, to bring up plates and eggs, and even shillings.[4] It is known that he kept for some time a tame bear in his rooms, and on his departure from College gave offence to the Cambridge dons by the remark, that he left the bear behind, in order that it might be elected a fellow of the college in his stead.

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 133.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 175. Compare Lady Blessington's *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 55.

[3] Moore's *Life*, i. 133.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 94.

From the summer of 1806 to the June of 1807, Byron spent a whole year at Southwell, to which his mother had removed in the year 1804. Southwell, at the present day with its 3,500 inhabitants, is a quiet country spot, half town, half village, situated in an undulating plain, rich in pastures, a few miles to the north of Nottingham and the east of Newstead. It is not without a cultivated body of inhabitants, consisting principally of clergy and retired professional men, nor without important historical recollections. A noble old Minster in the Norman style, surrounded by not less noble trees, rises majestically above surrounding houses enclosed in gardens, and opposite to it stand the picturesque ivy-clad ruins of a former palace of the Archbishops of York. It is still remembered that Charles I. once took refuge here; and that Cromwell, 'the immortal rebel,'[1] besieged the archiepiscopal residence, and quartered his cavalry in the cathedral. Here on an open green space, Burgage Green, Mrs. Byron hired a house, in which Byron in 1804 spent his Harrow holidays. To the distinguished social position which he assumed, a play-bill, still preserved, of a strolling company of actors, dated in the above-mentioned year, bears witness; for the piece to be performed is described as ordered by Mrs. and Lord Byron. Byron appears to have felt himself far more at home here than at Cambridge, although, after he came to know the charms of London life, he repeatedly execrated the ennui and vulgarity of Southwell, and declared that he hated it; and assuredly, for a place so retired, he was, for any long period, utterly unfitted. The chief advantage was that he found some compensation for the domestic life, which was so painfully wanting in his own home, and particularly that he enjoyed the society of cultivated women. Of

[1] *Childe Harold*, iv. 85.

the Pigot family, which lived in a house on the opposite side of the Green, he became, during this period, almost a member. With the son, John Pigot,[1] who studied medicine in Edinburgh and spent his university vacations at home, as with his sister, Miss Elizabeth Bridget Pigot,[2] he formed an almost fraternal intimacy. In their society he laid aside, to a certain extent, the shyness which so over-mastered him, that on the arrival of a visitor he often sprang out of the window, and which made him averse to returning the visits of neighbours, and this all the more as though of inferior social rank, they lived for the most part in much better style. For his poetical efforts, also, he found in the Pigot family a warm, and to him hitherto unknown, sympathy and encouragement. John Pigot likewise possessed a poetical vein, and to his sister Byron once jestingly wrote, that her brother was now rhyming away at the rate of three lines per hour.[3] A worthy clergyman also, Mr. J. T. Becher,[4] took great interest in his first poetical attempts, and gave him much well-meant advice; and directed him specially to the study of Milton and Shakspeare, and, above all, of the Bible.

His own domestic condition was, alas! flagrantly contrasted with this cheerful pleasant society. The young man, conscious of his position as a peer, refused to be

[1] [J. M. B. Pigot, Esq., M.D., the last survivor, in all probability, of the Southwell circle, died at Ruddington (Notts), March 26, 1871, in his 86th year.]

[2] Miss Pigot, who died in the year 1866, at a good old age in her paternal town, regarded it as the business of her life and heart to preserve the memory of Byron. But to her he ever remained the poet of the *Hours of Idleness*; his youth was to her, even with regard to his poetry, the period of his glory.

[3] Moore's *Life*, i. 113.

[4] Mr. Becher devoted himself to the improvement of the state of the poor, and published at a later period a treatise, *The Anti-Pauper System*, London, 1828.

treated any longer as a child, but claimed a corresponding independence. His pride and self-will on the one hand, and still more the unmeasured violence of the mother on the other, led to terrible, and, were they not raised above all doubt, to almost incredible scenes. Things came to such a pass, that after a quarrel one evening, both mother and son secretly stole out during the night to the apothecary's, each making enquiry whether the other had not bought poison, and warning the apothecary not to attend to any such application. Byron beheld in all this the fulfilment of what the fortune-teller in Cheltenham had formerly predicted about him. On a certain occasion, when Mrs. Byron, not content with smashing plates and cups, seized the fire-irons, and threw the poker at her son, he, after advising with his friends, the Pigots, thought it most advisable to take flight at once. He hastened to London; his mother—his amiable Alecto, as he calls her on this occasion—as soon as she learnt his place of abode, pursued him thither. Here a peace, or rather a truce, was made between them, from which Byron, according to his own assertion, came forth victor.[1] His mother returned to Southwell, while he repaired to the small watering-places of Worthing and Little Hampton on the coast of Sussex, and in spite of her opposition ordered his groom to follow him thither with his horses and dogs.[2]

When the domestic storm had blown over Byron returned at the end of August to Southwell, whence shortly afterwards, accompanied by his friend Pigot, he made an excursion to the watering-place of Harrogate in Yorkshire. They drove in Byron's own carriage with post-horses, Byron's favourite dog, Boatswain, sitting by the side of the servant on the box. Another dog, a formidable bull-

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 107.

[2] See Letters to Mr. Pigot, Moore's *Life*, i. 108, 109.

dog called Nelson, who could not be left unmuzzled, followed with the groom and the riding horses. Byron sometimes took delight in removing the muzzle from the bull-dog, and setting him to fight with the Newfoundland Boatswain. On one such occasion Nelson disappeared, rushed into the stable, and so bit one of the horses in the throat that the servant, to Byron's great regret, was obliged to shoot him with one of his master's constantly loaded pistols. John Pigot, to whom we owe these little details,[1] dwells much on the shyness before strangers which Byron displayed on this tour, and which had been considered by many, falsely, as pride. To Professor Hailstone alone, whom he knew at Cambridge, did he make any advances, but to him he showed the most respectful attention.

During his subsequent residence at Southwell, Byron occupied himself partly with an amateur theatre, in which he played a prominent part, and partly with the printing of his youthful poems. For the performances at the theatre, which took place at the house of a family of the name of Leacroft with which he was intimate, he wrote the prologue.[2] He played with great applause, among other parts, that of Penruddock in the 'Wheel of Fortune,' and Tristram Fickle in Allingham's farce of 'The Weathercock,' being types, as it were, of the two extremes between which his own character, in after life, so singularly oscillated.[3] Byron spoke also the epilogue, written by Mr. Becher, in which the persons who took part in the performance were humorously portrayed; at the rehearsal he delivered it in so pointless a manner that no one observed its drift and purpose, and all were the more surprised, when at the actual

[1] See Moore's *Life*, i. 113–15. [2] 'Hours of Idleness,' *Works*, vii. 10.
[3] See Moore's *Life*, i. 117.

representation, throwing into it all his talent for mimicry, he brought out its true meaning, amid the general laughter of the company.

The printing of the poems, which Byron with Pigot's help had carried on for some time, was finished in November.[1] It was a thin volume of a few quarto sheets printed by Ridge, a bookseller in Newark, at the author's expense. From his heartless mother, whom he describes as the 'upas tree and antidote of poetry,' Byron had kept back his poetical effusions, making it an express condition with his friend Pigot, that he would not, under any condition, allow her to see or touch his manuscripts.[2] The first complete copy he sent to Mr. Becher, who, objecting to a certain poem for its too warm colouring, forthwith expressed his well-meant censure to the young author in some verses. Byron replied both in verse[3] and in prose, and called in immediately the copies which had been distributed, and in Mr. Becher's presence burnt the impression; Mr. Becher's own copy, and a second which had been sent to Edinburgh, probably to Pigot who had returned thither, alone escaped the auto-da-fè. Surely no poet ever showed greater docility or modesty.

But Byron was now possessed with the printing fever through which every author has to pass, and considered himself, moreover, bound to make compensation to his friends for the copies he had called in. He accordingly set to work at once upon an expurgated and enlarged edition, which, to the extent of one hundred copies, was ready in the beginning of January 1807. This second impression of the 'Early Poems' has also disappeared with the exception of a few copies: for this impression too appears partly to have been called in at a later period by the

[1] See Appendix (D).

[2] See Letter to Mr. Pigot, Moore's *Life*, i. 109.

[3] See 'Hours of Idleness,' *Works*, vii. 116.

author. One copy he gave to Henry Edward Pigot,[1] a younger brother of John and Elizabeth, to whom he had stood godfather, and whose grandfather instead of godfather he loved in jest to call himself. Two other copies fell into the hands of Henry Mackenzie (the author of the 'Man of Feeling') and Lord Woodhouselee,[2] both of whom expressed their approbation by letter to the young poet in an encouraging manner. Cheered by this favourable reception, Byron ventured to step beyond the circle of his friends and to appear before the public with his poetical attempts, transforming his 'Early Poems' into the 'Hours of Idleness,' which were published in March 1807, by Ridge at Newark, a place utterly unknown in the literary world, and again at his own expense. To the poems themselves we shall return.

Byron went back to Cambridge about the end of June 1807, as a poet, who had made his appearance before the public, and who had attained a certain recognition, though in a limited circle, in order to take leave of the University. He changed his mind, however, and consented to remain there another year, at least in name. It is evident that he accommodated himself to college life even less than before, and henceforth he really

[1] It bore the inscription, written in Byron's own hand: 'Harry Edward Pigot: the gift of his grandfather, George Gordon Byron, 1807.' H. E. Pigot entered into the service of the East India Company, and died October 28, 1830, he being then captain in the Twenty-third regiment of Native Infantry. In the sudden sinking of the vessel in which he was, on the river Coosy, this book, which he had just been reading, was about the only thing which he saved. After his death his daughter ought it back to England, where, in September 1862, it formed the ornament of a bazaar in behalf of the volunteers in East Retford, and was sold by auction for the sum of 25*l*. *Habent sua fata libelli!* See the account in *Notes and Queries*, November 1, 1862, p. 346.

[2] Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, is known by his translation of Schiller's *Robbers* (1792), which exercised a considerable influence on the study of German literature in Scotland.

divided his time between the dissipations of Cambridge and London, until, in the September of the following year, he took up his residence at Newstead. On his return to Cambridge, his friends scarcely recognised him. He had already in Southwell begun his notorious system of reducing himself, and to his great joy had lessened his weight, by means of strong exercise, much medicine, and frequent warm baths, by twenty-seven pounds. The summer vacations of this year he spent at Dorant's Hotel in London, completely left to himself, without family and relations, without the love of father, mother, brothers or sisters—a dangerous existence for a youth of nineteen, with such rich endowments and with such strong passions! The description which Byron gives of Lara's youth he evidently means for his own:—

> Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,
> Lord of himself—that heritage of woe,
> That fearful empire, which the human breast
> But holds to rob the heart within of rest!
> With none to check, and few to point in time
> The thousand paths that slope the way to crime;
> Then, when he most required commandment, then
> Had Lara's daring boyhood governed men.
> It skills not, boots not, step by step to trace
> His youth through all the mazes of its race;
> Short was the course his restlessness had run,
> But long enough to leave him half undone.[1]

It is only a matter of wonder that he survived all this. He threw himself into the vortex of pleasure and fashionable life, played the precocious dandy, took instruction in the noble art of boxing with the well-known prize-fighter John Jackson, whom he calls his 'corporeal master and pastor,'[2] swam in the Thames, and played hazard. Accompanied by a fair mistress, who travelled with him in male attire under the name of a younger brother or

[1] *Lara*, canto i. st. 2.

[2] Note to *Don Juan*, canto xi. st. 19.

page, he made excursions to Brighton and elsewhere: he afterwards took her with him on a visit to Newstead. As a matter of course he fell deeper and deeper into debt, and reckoned quite coolly that before he was of age, his debts would amount to nine or ten thousand pounds. At the same time he brooded over plans of travel to the Scottish Highlands, and even to Iceland; but forbids a correspondent to inform his mother of his intentions, dreading, as he says, the 'usual maternal war-whoop.'[1]

His budding authorship formed, strange to say, the only counterpoise to these ruinous excesses. He saw, with gratified vanity, his youthful work in the windows of the booksellers' shops, heard of its not inconsiderable sale, and read the favourable criticisms which appeared of it in the 'Literary Recreations,' and the 'Critical Review'—periodicals which have been long forgotten. In a third, the 'Satirist,' he was censured in a spirit in harmony with its title. His poems were graciously received especially among the ranks of the nobility, and the Duchess of Gordon, wife of the chief of his clan on the mother's side, wished to make his acquaintance. Stimulated by this success he set himself to greater poetical works; he began an epic poem, 'Bosworth Field,' and a romance, neither of which was ever completed. He wrote also a review of Wordsworth's poems for the periodical first mentioned, 'Monthly Literary Recreations.'[2]

During the winter of 1807–8, which he spent in Cambridge, his associates appear to have been of a graver and more thoughtful character, and to have exercised a good influence upon him. To this period belongs his intimacy with Hobhouse, who, like him, was devoting himself to literary pursuits. His aversion to the Uni-

[1] Letter to Miss Pigot, Moore's *Life*, i. 173.

[2] Reprinted in vol. vi. (App.) of the *Life and Works*, p. 203-205.

versity, however, continued if possible to increase: he complains that Alma Mater had been to him an *injusta noverca*,[1] though he cannot but admit that he had done little to gain either her love or respect. That the University at his departure gave him the degree of Artium Magister, was simply because she could not avoid it.[2] Years afterwards Byron, in the poem of 'Beppo,' could not let the occasion escape him of giving vent in bitter words to his hatred of Cambridge.[3] This and the recollections of his earlier attacks in the 'Hours of Idleness' called forth a poetical reply from an unknown rhymester, who assumed to speak in the name of Alma Mater, the chief force of which consisted in abuse. The following lines may be taken as a specimen:[4]

> Degenerate son, indeed it makes me smile
> To hear thee thus our sacred domes revile,
> In language to my better sons applied,
> Which scullions ofttimes use whene'er they chide.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Quack of the Mount, Pierian Charlatan,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Really, my Lord, your numbers I could swear
> Were grunted—has he left you—by your bear.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Yours is the trade of authorship no more;
> You vend your crazy couplets by the score.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Then might due praises wait on Crabbe and Scott,
> And thine unhallowed ravings be forgot.

Thus Cambridge and Byron separated, and only after his death did a reconciliation take place. Trinity College, honouring him and herself, has placed the statue of the

[1] Letter to Harness, Moore's *Life*, i. 238.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] Stanza 76.
[4] *A Poetical Epistle from Alma Mater to Lord Byron, occasioned by some lines in* 'Beppo.' Cambridge, 1819.

poet, excluded from Westminster Abbey, in her Library, and has thus ranked him with her other great members, Newton and Macaulay, whose statues (by Roubiliac and Woolner) stand in the ante-chapel. A number of his admirers, with Hobhouse at their head, raised by subscription the sum of 1,000*l.*, which, however, was inadequate to secure the services of any eminent British artist; but Thorwaldsen having offered to undertake the work for that sum, the Committee closed with the generous proposal of that illustrious sculptor. The statue, though begun at the end of the year 1829, was not sent to England till 1834. Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the British Museum, the National Gallery were each in its turn considered as appropriate places for its reception; but all—even the secular institutions—refused to receive it, and the statue remained for ten years or longer unpacked in the cellars of the Custom House. Its exclusion from Westminster Abbey led to an animated controversy, and was the occasion of Hobhouse's 'Remarks on the Exclusion of Lord Byron's Monument from Westminster Abbey.'[1] The subscribers had not failed to point out to the artist that 'le pied droit de Byron était un peu contrefait,' and suggested that this defect might be best concealed by a sitting attitude. Thorwaldsen, accordingly, represents Byron seated on some broken fragments of Greek art, on which are carved a lyre and the owl of Athene. In his left hand he holds 'Childe Harold' half open, while with the right he leans the *stylus* on his chin, as if he were pursuing a thought which he wished to write down. The left foot rests on the fragment of a Doric column; the right leg is stretched out, the position suggesting, almost insensibly, the notion of a bodily

[1] Originally printed for private circulation, but afterwards published in the 3rd edition of his *Travels in Albania*, i. 522–544.

defect. On the ground lies a skull, with reference perhaps to the gloomy and melancholy feelings of the poet, or more particularly to his skull-cup.[1] The head is a repetition of the bust made by Thorwaldsen from life, of which we shall hereafter speak.

[1] Or rather to the stanzas 5 and 6 of the second canto of 'Childe Harold:'—

'Remove yon skull from out the scattered heaps,' &c.'

CHAPTER III.

NEWSTEAD ABBEY.

1808-1809.

THE priory of Newstead (de novo Loco) was founded by Henry II. soon after 1170, and dedicated to God and the Virgin. In all probability its foundation was partly prompted by the desire to expiate the murder of Thomas à Beckett; though on the other hand, along with its religious purposes, there was evidently the intention of securing a strong position for the settling and civilising of the wild district in Sherwood Forest, where, amid the hilly region of Annesley, Newstead lay a few miles to the north-west of Nottingham. It is a peculiar coincidence, that as Ettrick Forest formed the romantic background of Walter Scott's home and life, so Sherwood Forest, made famous by Robin Hood and his merry men, forms the background of Byron's. Scarcely any other traces, indeed, than poetical legends and reminiscences, either of Sherwood or of Ettrick Forest, have withstood the destructive influence of time. At and around Newstead are still pointed out Robin Hood's hills, Robin Hood's stable, and Friar Tuck's cell; there is Fountain Dale, where Tuck lived for seven years, and at Mansfield, in close vicinity, now a thriving manufacturing town, is the scene of the ballad 'The King and the Miller of Mansfield.' This poetry of merry Sherwood Forest exercised, however, not the least perceptible influence on

the poetical development of Byron; while the echo of Ettrick Forest sounds, so to speak, like a refrain through all the life and fictions of Scott. It is remarkable also that it was Scott, and not Byron, who, in 'Ivanhoe,' enchanted us with the old life of Sherwood Forest. The monks at Newstead contributed without doubt to put an end to the practices and wild ways of the outlaws of Sherwood. They were canons regular of the order of Saint Augustine, and their merits in the work of civilisation were perhaps the cause of their enjoying the royal favour in things spiritual and temporal. They afterwards sank, in all probability, into luxury, and the Reformation extinguished their power and influence. Henry VIII. gave Newstead to the Byron family in reward for faithful and distinguished services. 'Sir John Byron the little, with the great beard,' was the fortunate recipient, and was at the same time appointed Lieutenant of Sherwood Forest. The Abbey was now adapted as much as possible to its secular character; its ecclesiastical character could not, however, be altogether obliterated, and much was still left which recalled its earlier destination.

The accession of property which the Byrons received by this secularisation was by no means inconsiderable. Newstead at the present day comprises, in wood, meadow and arable land 3,226 acres, with some lakes, well stocked with fish, of about forty-eight acres in extent. The latter were formed by the monks, by damming up a little stream, in order the more conveniently to supply themselves with the fish diet prescribed by their fasts. In one of these lakes, during the life of the fifth lord, a brazen eagle was found, which evidently had been used as a lectern, and within which the monks had concealed many valuable documents and charters belonging to the foundation. These documents have since disappeared, one only of their

number having been saved from destruction by Colonel Wildman; but the eagle itself, restored to its ancient and original purpose, is now in Southwell Minster. The most beautiful description of Newstead and its park Byron has himself given in 'Don Juan.'

It stood embosom'd in a happy valley,
Crown'd by high woodlands, where the Druid oak
Stood like Caractacus, in act to rally
His host, with broad arms 'gainst the thunderstroke;
And from beneath his boughs were seen to sally
The dappled foresters; as day awoke,
The branching stag swept down with all his herd,
To quaff a brook which murmur'd like a bird.

Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,
Broad as transparent, deep, and freshly fed
By a river, which its soften'd way did take
In currents through the calmer water spread
Around: the wildfowl nestled in the brake
And sedges, brooding in their liquid bed:
The woods sloped downwards to its brink, and stood
With their green faces fix'd upon the flood.

Its outlet dash'd into a deep cascade,
Sparkling with foam, until again subsiding,
Its shriller echoes—like an infant made
Quiet—sank into softer ripples, gliding
Into a rivulet; and thus allay'd,
Pursued its course, now gleaming, and now hiding
Its windings through the woods; now clear, now blue,
According as the skies their shadows threw.

A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile
(While yet the church was Rome's) stood half apart
In a grand arch, which once screen'd many an aisle.
These last had disappear'd—a loss to art:
The first yet frown'd superbly o'er the soil,
And kindled feelings in the roughest heart,
Which mourn'd the power of time's or tempest's march,
In gazing on that venerable arch.

Within a niche, nigh to its pinnacle,
  Twelve saints had once stood sanctified in stone;
But these had fallen, not when the friars fell,
  But in the war which struck Charles from his throne,
When each house was a fortalice—as tell
  The annals of full many a line undone,—
The gallant cavaliers, who fought in vain
For those who knew not to resign or reign.

But in a higher niche, alone, but crown'd,
  The Virgin-Mother of the God-born child,
With her Son in her blessed arms, look'd round;
  Spared by some chance when all beside was spoil'd;
She made the earth below seem holy ground.
  This may be superstition, weak or wild,
But even the faintest relics of a shrine
Of any worship wake some thoughts divine.[1]

We feel as we read this, with how profound a melancholy he is filled at the loss of his ancestral seat. Another description, in prose, we owe to his friend Matthews: 'Though sadly fallen into decay, it is still completely an abbey, and most part of it is still standing in the same state as when it was first built. There are two tiers of cloisters, with a variety of cells and rooms above them, which, though not inhabited, nor in an inhabitable state, might easily be made so; and many of the original rooms, among which is a fine stone hall, are still in use. Of the Abbey Church only one end remains; and the old kitchen, with a long range of apartments, is reduced to a heap of rubbish. Leading from the Abbey to the modern part of the habitation, is a noble room, seventy feet in length and twenty-three in breadth; but every part of the house displays neglect and decay, save those which the present lord has lately fitted up. The house and gardens are entirely surrounded by a wall with battlements. In front is a large lake, bordered here and there with castellated buildings, the chief of which stands on

[1] Cant. xiii. 56–61.

an eminence at the further extremity of it.'[1] So far Matthews. These castellated buildings are the little forts erected by the fifth Lord, which have already been mentioned. But Matthews does not dwell, although it is the most striking part of the whole, on the ivy-mantled west front, with its great arched window, which Byron celebrates in an exquisite stanza:—

> A mighty window, hollow in the centre,
> Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,
> Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,
> Streaming from off the sun like seraphs' wings,
> Now yawns all desolate; now loud, now fainter,
> The gale sweeps through its fretwork, and oft sings
> The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire
> Lie with their hallelujahs quench'd like fire.

The Gothic fountain also, in the midst of the court,

> decked with carvings quaint,
> Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,
> And here perhaps a monster, there a saint,

has its peculiar charm. Thus the whole is a mixture of abbey and baronial mansion, of which, in its way, but few finer examples are to be found.

As we have seen, Mrs. Byron, when she first came to Newstead with her son, could not reside there, but lived, up to the time of Byron's majority, successively in London, Nottingham, and Southwell. But in spite of the decay into which Newstead had fallen, an admirer of its beauties was found in the person of Lord Grey de Ruthen, who, during the minority of the heir, hired and occupied it. His lease terminated April 1808, and in the September of this year, Byron, after he had turned his back on Cambridge, here took up his residence. His first care was to

[1] See Moore's *Life*, i. 248.

put the house, partially at least, into a habitable condition, and to his honour it must be said, that in this he considered his mother's convenience not less than his own. For each two rooms were furnished; as the means, however, taken for the repairing of the roof were insufficient, the rain again after a few years came through, and reduced them to the state of the other uninhabited parts of the mansion. A thorough restoration would have demanded so great an expenditure, that Byron could not for a moment think of attempting it. Besides this, too, as his intention to travel became more and more confirmed, he thought chiefly of providing a refuge and home for his mother. During his absence, she was to live at Newstead, and in case of any accident to himself, was to have the house and property for life.[1]

Not only during the arrangements at Newstead, but until Byron's departure for the Levant, his mother remained in Southwell, which, considering her relations with her son, was at any rate the preferable course. She appears, indeed, to have had a longing for Newstead, which, however, Byron refused to gratify: he knew their incompatibility of temper. He invited instead some friends to pay him a visit, in order that, free from restraint and observation, they might continue the foolish extravagances of their university life. Matthews, one of these companions, draws, in connection with the already quoted description of the mansion, a very lively picture of their wild mode of living. At the entrance door of the great hall lay chained, on the right hand, a bear, and, on the left, a wolf; and in the hall itself the young inmates of the abbey fired at a mark with pistols; so that anyone entering had to give notice of his approach by a loud

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 217.

cry, if he would not expose himself to the danger of a stray bullet. Far beyond the bad English custom, day was turned into night and night into day. About one o'clock the young men were accustomed to rise; Matthews, who got up between eleven and twelve, was regarded as a prodigy of early rising. The morning, i.e. the afternoon from two till seven o'clock, was devoted to boxing, riding, cricket, sailing and swimming on the lake, and, occasionally, to reading. Then came dinner, during which the oftenmentioned cup made of a human skull filled with Burgundy went round.[1] Imagining that the monks at the Reformation might have buried their treasures, Byron began to excavate, though nothing but stone coffins and skulls were discovered. One of these coffins he placed in the hall, and a skull of unusual size he caused to be polished and set in silver—the notorious skull-cup, which was regarded by severe religionists as an infallible proof of Byron's utter profanity and atheism.[2] Some other skulls, to the horror of the maid-servants, were placed in Byron's study. The young men went still further: they profanely imitated the costumes of the old monks, and appeared in them at dinner; the part of Abbot being played by the host. The conversation sparkled with wit and fun, and was continued deep into the night. To Byron's delight Newstead had also its ghost, and half in earnest and half in irony, he encouraged the belief in it.[3] In order to pass the time in another and a better fashion, Byron proposed to attempt some dramatic representations with his friends, in which, for want of ladies, the women's parts were to be undertaken by the young men; but it does not appear that

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 250.

[2] See 'Lines inscribed upon a Cup formed from a Skull;' and Lockhart's note, *Life and Works*, vii. 217.

[3] Compare the ballad of the 'Black Brother' in *Don Juan*, canto xvi. 36, *et seqq.*

the plan was carried out, or at least only on one occasion. This 'Sturm und Drang' of the young men bore, indeed, a different character from the doings of Robin Hood and his companions in merry Sherwood Forest, or from the sleek luxury and the sanctimonious worldliness of the later monks. What a change of life and manners on the same spot! Byron and his companions were gay, wild, and thoughtless, but by no means so corrupt and depraved as Byron afterwards painted himself and them, or as narrow-minded bigots believed. Their follies were but the exuberance of youthful energies which had not as yet found their vent. The breaking up of the party was characteristic: Matthews and Hobhouse walked for a freak to London, but were a week on the road, being detained by the rain. On the way they quarrelled and parted, and repeatedly passed each other without exchanging a word. Matthews arrived at home without a penny in his pocket.

That Byron found no real satisfaction in these practices is evident from various circumstances. He was the only one of the party who read much; he spent many hours plunged in melancholy. He brooded over the future, and anticipated it without joyousness. When he came first as a boy to Newstead, he planted an oak in the park, which is still shown to strangers as 'Byron's oak,' and with this tree he superstitiously connected a fancy, that their fortunes would be linked together. When now again he visited it he found it overgrown with weeds and almost destroyed. The gloomy thoughts that arose in his mind, he expressed in the lines 'To an Oak at Newstead.'[1] The death also of his favourite dog Boatswain threw him into a deeper gloom. This faithful animal,

[1] See Lockhart's note, *Life and Works*, vii. 206.

who had gained the goodwill of all the guests, and had become, so to speak, a personality inseparable from Newstead—his progeny long bore the name of Boatswain there—died of madness, and his master, little aware of the existence of the malady, is said to have wiped the slaver from the dog's mouth. The epitaph composed on him by Byron is well known,[1] and the 'dog's grave' is to the present day shown among the conspicuous objects at Newstead. Byron went so far as to give instructions, in a provision of his will (ultimately, however, cancelled) that his own body should be buried by the side of Boatswain, as his truest and only friend. We can, to a certain extent, understand and palliate his misanthropy when we read the accounts of the celebration of his majority (January 22, 1809). The customary ox was, indeed, roasted, and, as it appears from Moore,[2] a ball was given, but we hear not a syllable of either mother or sister, or guardian, or any other relative taking any part in these festivities. The money, too, requisite to defray the expenses had to be borrowed from moneylenders at extravagant interest; how far this necessity of raising money was the consequence of Byron's own extra-

[1] NEAR THIS SPOT
ARE DEPOSITED THE REMAINS OF
ONE WHO POSSESSED BEAUTY WITHOUT VANITY,
STRENGTH WITHOUT INSOLENCE,
COURAGE WITHOUT FEROCITY,
AND ALL THE VIRTUES OF MAN WITHOUT HIS VICES.
THIS PRAISE, WHICH WOULD BE UNMEANING FLATTERY
IF INSCRIBED OVER HUMAN ASHES,
IS BUT A JUST TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF
BOATSWAIN, A DOG,
WHO WAS BORN IN NEWFOUNDLAND MAY 1803,
AND DIED AT NEWSTEAD ABBEY NOVEMBER 18, 1808.
Moore's *Life*, i. 222.

[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 227.

vagance, or how far his guardian had failed to husband the resources of his property, it is now impossible to ascertain. Under such circumstances, is it to be wondered at that he professed to be so deeply attached to an animal?

It was mainly owing to the celebrated article on his youthful poems in the 'Edinburgh Review' that Byron did not waste his powers in such idle pursuits, but began to aspire to higher aims. This paper written according to general belief, either by Jeffrey[1] or by Brougham, appeared in the January number of 1808, and produced the bitterest disgust both in Byron himself and his mother. He affected, indeed, great indifference, and played the part of the well-schooled author hardened to such things; he tells us that he had heard of the article six weeks before it appeared, that immediately on the day of its publication he read it, and then dined with his friend Davies, drank three bottles of claret, and slept well;[2] but these same three bottles of claret would seem to indicate a state of feeling neither calm nor indifferent. His indifference was, at all events, feigned, for he felt deeply mortified, not only as a poet, but probably also as a peer. Nor, to own the truth, could the 'Hours of Idleness' make any great claim to praise and respect; their poetical horizon does not extend beyond the experiences, external and internal, of school life; and much in the volume is not even original but free translation. Only on account of his later creations and as exhibiting the first stage of his poetical development do these poems possess any importance. Compared with the youthful productions—mentioned in that article of the 'Edinburgh Review'—of Cowley or Pope, or with those of Chatterton, Keats, or Shelley, they are manifestly insignificant, and in no respect betray the

[1] He appears to have regarded Jeffrey as the author.

[2] Moore's *Life*, v. 146.

great genius of Byron. Their attacks on institutions and persons standing high in the estimation of men, and which could be tolerated only from undoubted pre-eminence, seemed to demand and justify a castigation; so that, if these things be taken into account, we cannot join in the cry of reprobation raised against the Reviewer, whoever he may be. He might, certainly, have shown more indulgence; but it is difficult to dispute with a reviewer on the more or less of tenderness to be exercised. Besides, severity and irony formed constituents of the critical tone of the times, and especially of the 'Edinburgh Review,' whose Whiggism also may have been gratified in making an example of a young nobleman. Be this as it may, the Reviewer, undesignedly, rendered an extraordinary service to poetry and to the world; he roused the genius of Byron, as steel draws forth the spark from flint. Byron himself admits that he was born for opposition;[1] nor would

> I have worn the motley mantle of a poet,
> If some one had not told me to forego it.[2]

That he had no thought of a poetical career, he expressly testifies in the 'Hours of Idleness:' 'Poetry,' he says in the preface, 'is not my primary vocation;' he is only an intruder in the groves of the Muses, and looks to the few who will hear with patience that *dulce est desipere in loco.* This is in accordance with another expression, that poetic fame was by no means the *acme* of his wishes.[3] Agreeably to the expectations which were so often cherished of him, he probably meditated the career of a statesman. He declares also in the same preface, that the 'Hours of Idleness' should be his 'first and last attempt' in poetry—

[1] *Don Juan*, canto xv. 22.
[2] *Ibid.* st. 24.
[3] Moore's *Life*, i. 126.

a threat which in later life he often repeated. His youthful poems, therefore, professed to be only the aristocratic diversion of a young nobleman,—could they, then, extort great respect from a critic?

The tables were, however, now to be turned. During his residence at Newstead, and, as it appears, unknown to his friends, Byron was working at a poetical retaliation, which was to crush his foes and prove his vocation as a poet. This was the celebrated satire 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' It would seem as if he had been conscious of the decisive importance of this venture; for on none of his poems did he bestow so much labour, relatively, as on this. Between the publication of the review and the satire a whole year elapsed, and yet he had begun to work at it immediately after his perusal of the article. When he returned to London, in the early spring of 1809, he took the manuscript with him, ready for the press, though even to the last moment he found something to amend or to add.

We here anticipate the course of events, in order to glance at Byron's further connections with Newstead Abbey, and its destinies when it ceased to be his. Byron could have been no poet—at least, not the poet so susceptible of impressions which he was—if a property so rich in historical, poetical, and aristocratic associations had not furnished ample food for his fancy, and filled his heart with complacency and pride. From the 'Hours of Idleness' to 'Don Juan,' the recollection of Newstead steals through his poetry like the wail of an Æolian harp, and the already mentioned description of it in the latter, is among the gems of his poetical creations. Nor could he hide from himself that Newstead gave a powerful support and brilliant background to his social position. He shows his consciousness of this when

he writes (March 6, 1809) to his mother: 'Come what may, Newstead and I stand or fall together. I have now lived on the spot, I have fixed my heart on it, and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inheritance. I have that pride within me which will enable me to support difficulties. I can endure privations; but could I obtain in exchange for Newstead Abbey the first fortune in the country I would reject the proposition. Set your mind at ease on that score; Mr. Hanson talks like a man of business on the subject—I feel like a man of honour, and I will not sell Newstead.'[1]

So thought and so felt Byron the youth; but a few years sufficed to produce a change in these resolutions, and Byron the man allowed himself to be determined by other considerations in his mode of action. The state of his affairs was, indeed, beset with extraordinary difficulties which threatened to overwhelm him. His great-uncle had, as already mentioned, illegally sold Rochdale, with which the barony was connected, and by the Court of Chancery, or by his guardian, a lawsuit had been instituted for its recovery. In this process, which was won at last, large sums were spent,—Medwin[2] states them as 14,000*l.*—and as it continued for many years, during which Byron was deprived of the income arising from this property, he found himself restricted exclusively to the proceeds of Newstead, which were by no means excessive, amounting only to about 1,500*l.* per annum, an income utterly inadequate to the rank and position of an English peer; and Byron, who had been trained to anything but economy, must have possessed an inclination and taste for a life of sober and modest retirement, had he

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 234.

[2] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 49.

been content to accommodate himself to this. But instead of it, he lived extravagantly, contracted debts, and even gave to others the *honorarium* he derived from his works. With the best-regulated economy, however, a thorough restoration of Newstead would have far exceeded his means. The sale of Newstead became, therefore, a matter of necessity; and accordingly Byron, in the autumn of 1812, resolved to sell it by auction; but, the sum of 90,000*l.* only being offered, no sale took place.[1] Two years later a sale was privately agreed upon for 140,000*l.*; but again the business fell through, the purchaser, as it appears, being unable to pay the purchase-money.[2] Byron received, however, from the latter indemnification to the amount of 25,000*l.*, which he applied, partly, to the liquidation of debts, and partly squandered away. It was at this period[3] (Sept. 1814) that he was at Newstead, probably for the last time, accompanied by his sister, and took farewell of it. He wandered with her through the park, and on a tree with a double stem cut the two names 'Byron' and 'Augusta.'[4] In November 1817, the estate was at last sold, although the formal conveyance of the property was delayed till the summer of the following year. The purchaser was Major (afterwards Colonel)

[1] See Dallas' *Recollections*, p. 249.

[2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 112.

[3] *Ibid.* iii. 112.

[4] [The stem on which the names were cut being threatened with decay has been removed by Mr. Webb, and the interesting portion of the trunk is preserved in a glass case at Newstead, on which is inscribed: 'This portion of the tree, on which George Noel Lord Byron engraved his and his sister's names on his last visit to Newstead, was cut from the trunk in 1861, to preserve it from decay.' The names and the date stand thus:

BYRON,
20th Sept. 1814,
AUGUSTA.

TRANSLATOR.]

Wildman, the school companion of the poet at Harrow, who had meanwhile served with honour in the wars against Napoleon, and had been present at the battles of Corunna, Pampeluna, Quatre-Bras, and lastly Waterloo. In Colonel Wildman a new era began for Newstead. He regarded it as the darling business of his life, not only to restore the former seat of his celebrated school companion to its ancient glory, in which object he expended above 80,000*l.*,[1] but to preserve and cherish all recollections of the Byron family, especially of the poet, with devoted reverence. He looked on himself, especially after Byron's death, to a certain extent, as the guardian of a national monument, and with this feeling exercised the noblest hospitality.[2] At the same time, Colonel Wildman watched over the tenants and labourers, who, according to Washington Irving's expression, had, under 'the dynasty of the Byrons, borne their part in the general mismanagement and decay, and yet had been too devoted or too dull to tear themselves from their native soil.' He improved and renovated their dwellings, fostered and encouraged their industry, and spread over the whole estate kindness and care,—two good things which had long been wanting to it. The poet, although attached to some individuals among his subordinates and looking to their interests, yet neither heeded nor understood the economical relations of his property; these lay beyond the sphere of his sympathies.

At the time when Colonel Wildman had finished this restoration of Newstead, and while Byron was still alive, there lived in one of the farmhouses an eccentric character who, from Washington Irving's description, has become famous under the name of 'the little white lady.' She

[1] Washington Irving's *Newstead Abbey*, p. 109.

[2] Among many others, Washington Irving was his guest for three weeks, and wrote during this time his charming book on Newstead.

was called Sophia Hyatt, and was the daughter of a country bookseller. She had lost both her parents, and had been deprived of the sense of hearing by a severe illness, which at the same time entailed the almost complete loss of speech; even her vision also was singularly weak. Without relatives and friends (her only brother had died in the West Indies), she was, as it were, excluded from human society, and her only means of support consisted of an annual pension of about 20*l.* which a cousin in London caused to be paid to her, that she might not fall on the parish. This unfortunate person was filled with an enthusiasm bordering on monomania for Byron, whom she had never seen, and for his poetry. Day by day she flitted like an owl about the park and around the Abbey, and gave utterance to her dreams in touching though mediocre verses, of which Irving has communicated some specimens. Colonel Wildman and his wife showed a sincere interest in her, and when at last 'the little white lady' was compelled by necessity to go to her cousin in London, in order to obtain some further aid from him, she handed to Mrs. Wildman a long farewell letter together with a packet of her poems. The letter contained an unreserved statement of her circumstances. Acting in harmony with her husband, Mrs. Wildman decided at once to offer her a permanent home in one of their farmhouses. The servant sent with the message, finding that she had left her home, hastened after her on horseback to Nottingham. The first thing which he saw there, was a crowd of people in the street standing round a person who had met with an accident. It was 'the little white lady,' who had been driven over by a heavy waggon, the approach of which she had not heard: she had died instantly, without suffering.

It only remains briefly to say, that at the death of

Colonel Wildman, the estate was again sold in the year 1860, and became the property of W. F. Webb, Esq. The work of restoration commenced by his predecessor has been continued and perfected in admirable taste by the present proprietor; and the most ardent admirers of the great poet could not desire more touching proofs, that due honour is done to the memory of Byron in his old historical home, than those which meet the eyes of pilgrims from far and near at Newstead.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PILGRIMAGE.

1809–1811.

At the beginning of 1809 Byron, having attained his majority, repaired to London to assume his place in the political world, by taking his seat in the House of Lords; in the literary, by the publication of his Satire, by which, as Schiller by his 'Robbers,' he announced to the world that he had reached his intellectual manhood; and lastly in the social, by preparing for his long-intended *grand tour*.

If Byron had often occasion, during his minority, to feel his friendless and lonely condition, he had now again, when he took his seat in the senate of the realm, to experience the bitterness of his desolation. His guardian and kinsman the Earl of Carlisle, to whom, according to long-established custom, it belonged to introduce the young peer to the House, declined this honorary duty, although Byron had expressly requested him to undertake it. That Byron's demeanour in the mode of making this request had anything to do with this refusal, is nowhere hinted at and must not be assumed. The attack on his guardian in the passage of the Satire originally meant for a panegyric, thus becomes intelligible and in some degree more excusable. Byron had, therefore, to take (March 13) this important step alone; just, however, as he was on the point of getting into his carriage, his

kinsman Dallas, whose personal acquaintance he had first made in January 1808, and whose attentions to him had been obliging and well-meant, happened to call on him.[1] In default of a better companion, Byron asked him to accompany him, a request he was only too glad to comply with. Dallas, therefore, relates what took place as an eye-witness. Before starting, he says, it was visible that Byron was inwardly agitated. In the Upper House there were but few peers present, as the proceedings related to some ordinary business; when Byron entered, he looked paler than usual, and in the expression of his countenance mortification struggled with indignation. 'He passed by the woolsack without looking round and advanced to the table where the proper officer was attending to administer the oaths; when he had gone through them, the Chancellor (Lord Eldon) quitted his seat, and went towards him with a smile, putting out his hand warmly to welcome him. This was all thrown away upon Lord Byron, who made a stiff bow and put the tips of his fingers into a hand the amiable offer of which demanded the whole of his . . . . . and carelessly seated himself for a few moments on one of the empty benches to the left of the throne, usually occupied by the Lords in opposition. "If I had shaken hands heartily"—so Byron justified

[1] Robert Charles Dallas (born 1754, died 1824) was born at Kingstown in the Island of Jamaica and educated in Scotland. He entered the Inner Temple, intending to be called to the bar, but returned to Jamaica again. He afterwards resided successively in France, in the United States, and in England, where he attained some reputation by his writings. He wrote several romances—the collective edition of which he dedicated to Lord Byron—some plays and other things, and translated much from the French (among other books, Bertrand de Moleville's *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, Paris, 1800–1803, 14 vols. 8vo, under the English title *Annals of the French Revolution*, 5 vols. 8vo, London, 1813). He at St. Adresse in Normandy, to which he had retired in his later

afterwards his conduct to Dallas—"he would have set me down for one of his party; but I will have nothing to do with any of them on either side: I have taken my seat, and now I will go abroad."'[1]

A few days after this step, which should have been so gratifying instead of being, as it was, so depressing to Byron, the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' was published (March 16) by Cawthorn, a bookseller of little note, who undertook the publication, after it had been declined by the Longmans' house. The negotiations with him had been conducted by Dallas, who also carried the volume through the press,[2] during which he induced the poet to make various improvements and to soften many asperities. The copyright was reserved;[3] Byron, however, made over all the profits to the publisher. The title was originally to have been 'The British Bards;' instead of which Dallas suggested 'The Parish Poor of Parnassus;'[4] Byron, however, rejected both, and substituted the actual title, 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' To the poem itself Dallas, with true discernment, assigned a place beside Gifford's 'Baviad and Mæviad.' The anony-

[1] *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron*, pp. 53, 54.

[2] It has been already mentioned that Byron continually made additions while the volume was passing through the press, so that in one of his short notes to Dallas he says: 'Print soon or I shall overflow with rhyme.' (Moore's *Life*, i. 232.) One of these insertions—the passage referring to Lord Falkland—deserves mention, as it illustrates one of the noblest characteristics of Byron. Viscount Falkland, a personal acquaintance of Byron's, was a gallant but dissipated naval officer, who in the beginning of March 1809 was killed in a duel by Mr. Powell, and left a widow with several children in deep distress. Byron undertook the office of godfather to the youngest child, born just before the father's death, and managed to conceal a 500*l.* bank-note so dexterously in the cup which he gave as godfather, that it was discovered only after his departure; and this act he performed while he himself was overwhelmed with embarrassments.

[3] See Dallas' *Recollections*, p. 41.

[4] See *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron*, pp. 21, 22.

mous veil was speedily seen through. Not less speedily was the first edition sold off, and within short periods of time the first was followed by a second edition augmented by nearly 400 lines, and then by a third and fourth. Critical opinions, especially in the 'Anti-Jacobin,' and the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' declared in favour of the Satire; the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, however, took no notice of it, not at least till the publication of the fourth edition. Byron had now taken a brilliant revenge on the Edinburgh Reviewers, and could so far leave his country with a feeling of satisfaction. But, at the same time, he had scattered the seeds of many controversies and much unpleasantness; for he had attacked many without sufficient cause and with excessive bitterness; although the best among those whom he had thus assailed, as Moore, Scott, and Lord Holland, became afterwards his firmest friends.

Nothing now stood in the way of carrying out his plans for travelling. The conviction long had grown in Byron's mind that, in order to be just, we must learn to know men not merely from books, but from observation and experience. 'I am,' he writes to his mother, 'so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them, and the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to send our young men abroad, for a term, among the few allies our wars have left us.'[1] But practical and material reasons were also associated with this ideal ground of action. The shattered state of his finances made travelling expedient, for Byron knew well that, with his limited income, he could live, according to his rank, only on the

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 351.

Continent, or in the East. He was in every way tired of England, and longed to step beyond the narrow precincts of English society and culture, the bitter cup of which he had, according to his own opinion, drained to the dregs. His inclination leaned at first towards Persia and India; he would, as he says in the introduction to 'Childe Harold,'[1] pass the 'Earth's central line.' He accordingly collected information about India from the Professor of Arabic at Cambridge and from a friend of his mother, and took into his service a German servant who had been in Persia: he provided himself also with the requisite introductions to embassies and consulates. Gradually, however, he shrank from these extensive undertakings, the costs of which, considering the means of intercourse, which at that period had not attained their present perfection, far exceeded his resources; the journey to Persia, however, he entirely renounced only at Constantinople. How the mind and imagination of Byron had from childhood been directed to the lands of the Mediterranean and the Levant has been already related.

After these preparations and the necessary arrangements with his faithful travelling companion Hobhouse, he started from London June 11, 1809, not without having again to experience how 'friendless a being' he was. He left his mother and sister without bidding them farewell; the latter he had not seen for three years: on the other hand, he had set his affections on one of his school friends, by whom he believed them returned. They had lived much together and were about to exchange portraits. This friend, who had recently in a marked manner withdrawn from him, Byron invited to spend with him the last day before his departure; the invitation, however, was de-

[1] See canto i. st 11.

clined. 'And what do you think was his excuse?' said Byron, bursting with indignation, to Dallas; "he was engaged with his mother and some ladies to go shopping!" And he knows I set out to-morrow to be absent for years, perhaps never to return. Friendship! I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and family excepted, and, perhaps, my mother, a single being who will care what becomes of me.'[1]

With a retinue of servants more in accordance with his rank than with his fortune, Byron embarked, July 2, at Falmouth[2] on board the packet for Lisbon, where he arrived, after a favourable passage, on the 7th, and found the English fleet lying at anchor in the Tagus. Of Lisbon apart from its situation Byron has little good to say; Cintra, however, surprised him by its beauty and Mafra by its magnificence, but still more by the ignorance of its monks, who, while they showed him their library, asked him whether the English had any books in their country.[3] While Byron sent off a part of his baggage and some of his servants from Lisbon by ship to Gibraltar, he himself with the remainder rode on horseback from Aldea Gallega (the next stage, to be reached only by water, from Lisbon) to Seville, according to his own account a distance of almost 400 English miles.[4] The ride, so he tells his mother,[5] had not, in spite of the July heat, exhausted him; the roads were excellent, far better than the best English roads, and were besides free from tolls, the horses good, and as an English nobleman in an English uniform (which he had got made expressly for his travels) he

[1] Dallas' *Recollections*, pp. 63, 64.

[2] Of the exuberance of his spirits the farewell verses to Hodgson are the liveliest witness. See *Life and Works*, vii. 305.

[3] See Moore's *Life*, i. 281.

[4] See Moore's *Life*, i. 278.

[5] Dallas' *Correspondence*, i. 89.

found all the security and convenience he desired. At Seville, the women chiefly excited the interest of Byron, and about them he expressed himself with singular candour to his mother. During their three days' stay the travellers were lodged in the house of two unmarried ladies, the elder of whom, engaged to be married to an officer, offered to share her own apartment with Byron, which 'my virtue induced me to decline.'[1] At parting she gave him, in return for one of his, a lock of her own hair 'three feet long,' which he sent to his mother, and dismissed him with a tender kiss, saying: 'Adieu, you pretty fellow! you please me much.'[2] That Byron, in his twenty-second year, preferred the Spanish women to his own countrywomen, and was bewitched with their sensuous charms and southern glow, cannot of course excite our surprise. The bull-fights, and especially their unpoetic politics, were the other objects which occupied his mind. His social position gave him here, as everywhere, the opportunity of coming in contact with distinguished men, as for instance with General Castaños and Admiral Cordova, and of seeing more deeply into political movements. He saw also at Seville the famous Maid of Saragossa.[3] Nor does he forget to remark that here was the seat of the Junta, or to mock at the so-called victory of the English at Madrid, in which they lost 5,000 killed, among whom were 200 officers, without inflicting any loss on the French; he generally, indeed, takes every opportunity of speaking scornfully of the foreign policy of his country. The Alcazar and other magnificent monuments of Seville, the grave of Columbus, the memorials of Roman

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 282.

[2] *Ibid.* Who does not recognise here the germs of the first canto of *Don Juan*?

[3] See note to *Childe Harold*, canto i. st. 56.

and Moorish ruin, in which Scott's fancy would have revelled, left him cold and unmoved.[1]

From Seville they went again on horseback, to Cadiz, which Byron regarded as the crown of Spanish cities, 'full' as he writes to his mother,[2] 'of the finest women in Spain; the Cadiz belles being the Lancashire witches of their land.' To his great regret he could not prolong his stay in this paradise of women, but purposed to pay it another and a longer visit. From hence the English Admiral Purvis granted him a passage to Gibraltar on board an English frigate. As an English town Gibraltar is to him of course 'a cursed place,'[3] and its magnificent natural beauty elicits but one stanza devoted to admiration of its grandeur.[4] An intended excursion to the African coast, for which Byron had been already provided with letters of introduction from General Castaños to Moorish chiefs, had to be renounced that he might not miss the packet to Malta; a passage thither in an English man-of-war was not, to his great regret, to be obtained. From Gibraltar Byron sent home his old servant Joe Murray and his page Robert Rushton, retaining in his service only the well-known Fletcher; the two former he recommends in almost all his letters to the kind attention and care of his mother.[5]

Among other passengers on board the packet was Galt, who, in his Life of Byron,[6] dwells at some length on what he considers the aristocratic assumption of his manners, and on what he calls 'the influence of the incomprehensible phantasma which hovered about Lord Byron.' They touched at Cagliari, where they were all hospitably received by the English Ambassador Mr. Hill, and in the

[1] *Life and Works*, x. 208. [2] Moore's *Life*, i. 282. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] ii. st. 22. [5] See Moore's *Life*, i. 284, 285.

theatre saw the Sardinian royal family; after landing the mail at Girgenti, they arrived September 1 at Malta, where Byron and Hobhouse took up their abode till the 21st of the same month. Galt would have us believe, that Byron delayed his landing, because he hoped to be received as a peer with a salute from the fortress! As the two travellers could not find lodgings, the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, the next day provided them with a house. Byron's first care was to take lessons in Arabic from a monk, but his whole time and interest were very soon absorbed by 'a beautiful and amiable lady,' to whom, under the name of Florence, he addressed several poems,[1] and whom he describes as a modern Calypso. This was Mrs. Spencer Smith, then in her twenty-fifth year, one of the daughters of Baron Herbert, for many years Austrian Internuncio at Constantinople, and wife of Spencer Smith, English Minister at Stuttgard, and brother of the celebrated Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. This lady, while residing with her sister, the Countess Attems, at Venice, on account of her health, had there, in the year 1806, been arrested by the order of Napoleon, who contemplated, it was said, sending her as a state prisoner to Valenciennes. The Marquis de Salvo, a young Sicilian nobleman, a friend of the Countess Attems, and a profound admirer of the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Spencer Smith, generously and courageously determined to rescue the fair prisoner from the power of the French police, and succeeded with much address in conveying her to a place of safety in the Austrian dominions—to Grätz in Styria. The strange adventures which befell them in making their escape, Byron[2]

[1] Beside *Childe Harold*, ii. 30 *et seq.*, the following poems refer to her: 'To Florence,' *Life and Works*, vii. 308; 'Lines written in an Album,' *Ibid.* 308; 'Stanzas composed during a Thunderstorm,' *Ibid.* 311; 'Stanzas written in passing the Ambracian Gulf,' *Ibid.* 314.

[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 286.

in a letter to his mother says, were related and published by the Marquis himself in a special narrative; and the Duchesse d'Abrantes has devoted two chapters of one of the volumes of her memoirs[1] to a very vivid account of them. The story has so many romantic incidents, that we can only say: 'Si non è vero è ben trovato.' Madame Junot describes her as bewitchingly beautiful and graceful, with fair hair, transparent complexion, and perfectly formed. She was well acquainted with seven languages and their literatures, very musical, and a pattern of refined manners and of virtue—in one word, perfect, if we may believe her testimony. Her marriage however, according to Byron,[2] was by no means a happy one. Mrs. Smith was now, when Byron met her, on her way from Trieste—where she had been living with her mother—to join her husband in England. As she intended to sail from Malta in an English ship of war, Byron gave her a letter to his mother. That she had completely captivated Byron's susceptible heart may be taken as a matter of course, but Galt admits that the relation was purely Platonic.[3] Amid a present so full of fascination, Byron completely forgot the romantic past of the island, which at a later period kindled the failing intellect of Scott, to its final gleam. Galt, indeed, thinks[4] that some unpleasantness—perhaps the quarrel into which Byron fell with an officer—was the cause why Byron punished, so to speak, the island with his silence. But no such supposition is really needed; Byron's mind, as was repeatedly shown, seldom turned to the romance of history or locality.

The travellers left Malta in the 'Spider' brig of war, and on September 29, stepped on the soil of Albania at

[1] Vol. xv. p. 1–74.
[2] See letter cited above.
[3] *Life of Lord Byron*, p. 68.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 69.

Prevesa, over against Actium. It is very possible that the opportunity afforded by the ship had some influence in determining the route of the travellers; they appear at least to have had no very definite pre-arranged plan. Byron was in raptures with the scenes which are for ever associated with the great classic memories: he sailed past Ithaca, and the Rock of Leucadia (Santa Maura), from which Sappho had thrown herself into the sea; he saw where the battles of Actium and Lepanto had been fought, trod the soil where Mount Pindus towered on high, watered by Acheron and Achelous; looked on the waters of the Acherusian Lake, and where the sacred oaks of Dodona had rustled. Could his mind be filled with recollections more lofty or hallowed? Could richer nourishment be presented to his heart brooding over the transitoriness of things earthly? And yet life asserted its rights, and the present fascinated him still more than the past. He found himself transported, as if by the stroke of a magic wand, from the very centre of civilisation and refinement to that part of the Turkish empire which, even at the present day, 'contains most of the elements of mediæval barbarism.' He greets Albania as 'the rugged nurse of savage men.'[1]

> Here roams the wolf, the eagle whets his beak,
> Birds, beasts of prey, and wilder men appear,
> And gathering storms around convulse the closing year.[2]

The country too, though separated from Italy merely by a narrow arm of the sea, was more remote and unknown than many an American wild, and completely shut off from intercourse with the world. Byron could not but feel the liveliest sympathy with a condition of society, where individuality of character developed itself unimpeded

[1] *Childe Harold*, ii. 38.

[2] *Ibid.*, stanza 42.

by conventional barriers, and where to power and energy an unbounded field was opened. 'The Albanians, a people of warriors and bandits'—says Mendelssohn Bartholdy[1]—'have not advanced, even at the present day, beyond the stage of culture of the Pelasgians, their fathers.' The land and its people carried Byron back to Morven. 'The mountains,' he says, 'appeared Caledonian, only with a milder climate. The kilt of the Albanians (although white), their spare vigorous form, their Celtic-sounding dialect, and their hardy habits'—all reminded him of the highlands of Scotland.[2] The women astonished him by their beauty and their stately carriage.

Arriving, after a journey of three days over the mountains, at Janina, Byron learned that Ali Pacha was engaged in besieging Ibrahim Pacha in his castle of Berat. Ali, however, informed by the English Resident, Captain Leake, of the expected arrival of an Englishman of rank, had given the fullest orders for the hospitable reception of the strangers in true Eastern style, and invited them to his summer residence at Tepeleni, only one day's journey from Berat. Janina itself, which had hardly ever been trod by the foot of a traveller, and which, so to speak, Byron discovered, impressed him with its picturesque beauty; but the travellers shuddered when they suddenly saw hanging in a street the arm of a man who had been executed.[3] It is universally admitted among the Greeks, according to Byron,[4] that Janina takes the precedence of Athens in the wealth, refinement, learning and dialect of its inhabitants. Near the romantically situated monastery

[1] Compare Karl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Ali-Pacha of Janina in Raumer's *Historisches Taschenbuch*, 1867, pp. 87–176.

[2] Note B. to canto ii. of *Childe Harold.*

[3] See Hobhouse's *Albania*, i. 45. London, 1855.

[4] See note D. to canto ii. of *Childe Harold.*

of Zitza, which reminded him of Cintra, Byron's guides lost the road and wandered about with him in the mountains during a tremendous storm for nine hours. Hobhouse, who had ridden forward, and taken refuge at the approach of night in the village, anxious at the non-appearance of his companion, ordered muskets to be fired from time to time, and signal fires to be kindled on the heights. Byron had not, however, for a moment lost his composure or betrayed any weakness.[1] After a journey of nine days, they at last reached Tepeleni, where they remained three days. On their arrival here, the strangest spectacle presented itself to them. 'I shall never forget the singular scene on entering Tepeleni at five in the afternoon, as the sun was going down. It brought to my mind (with some change of dress, however,) Scott's description of Branksome Castle in his *Lay*, and the feudal system. The Albanians in their dresses (the most magnificent in the world. . . .), the Tartars with their high caps, the Turks in their vast pelisses and turbans, the soldiers and black slaves with the horses, the former in groups in an immense large open gallery in front of the palace, the latter placed in a kind of cloister below it, two hundred steeds ready caparisoned to move in a moment, couriers entering or passing out with despatches, the kettle-drums beating, boys calling the hour from the minaret of the mosque, altogether, with the singular appearance of the building itself, formed a new and delightful spectacle to a stranger.'[2] Tepeleni (where Ali was born in the year 1741) is enclosed on all sides by lofty and steep calcareous mountains: no tree or shrub flourishes on the barren precipices, and the narrow gorges through which the

[1] See the account in Hobhouse's *Albania*, i. 70–72.

[2] Byron's Letter to his Mother, Moore's *Life*, i. 291–294. Compare also Hobhouse's *Account*, i. 92, 93.

Vojussa (the river of sighs) rushes are the constant abode of winds and storms.

Next day (October 12) the 'Englishman of rank' was presented to the dreaded Pacha in a lofty marble hall, in the centre of which played a fountain. Byron made his appearance here also, as he does not forget to relate, in 'a full suit of staff uniform with a very magnificent sabre.'[1] Ali received him standing, made him sit down on his right hand, and asked him first why he had left his country at so early an age? Like the Turks of that day, he had not the least conception of travelling for culture or pleasure. He desired his respects to his mother, and flattered Byron by telling him, that he discovered his high birth by his small ears, his curling hair, and his small white hands.[2] He also begged him to regard him as his father, as long as he continued in Turkey, and sent to him as to a spoilt child twenty times a day almonds and fruit, sugared sherbet, and sweetmeats. It was now the fast of Ramasan, when, to the disgust of our travellers, believers made up for the fasting observed during the day by carousing all night. Ali's personal appearance made a very favourable impression, betraying nothing of the cruelty and barbarity of his character. He was nearly seventy years of age, short and corpulent, but with pleasing features, a white beard and a clear blue eye. His manners, like those of all Turks, were dignified and courteous.

It is evident that these scenes and occurrences made on Byron a deep and lasting impression, which we find reflected in his poetry; they suggested especially the subjects of his poetical tales. The character of Ali himself profoundly impressed him. He writes, indeed, to

[1] Letter to his Mother. Moore's *Life*, i. 294

[2] *Ibid.* i. 294.

his mother, that he is 'a tyrant without conscience, who had been guilty of the greatest cruelties;'[1] but he adds, immediately afterwards, that he is 'so brave and good a general, that he is called the Mahometan Bonaparte.' Who can say whether Byron was not conscious of some 'elective affinities' with certain points of his character, and may not perhaps have looked up to him with envy? 'All the actions of Ali,' says K. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, 'bear the character of the inspiration of the moment and of capricious self-will;' but action on sudden inspiration and from the caprices of self-will is the unmistakable characteristic of Byron. We do not mean to say by this that Byron could have resembled him in his cruelty, but he discerned the grandeur of Ali's character and the traits of genius which it indicated, and was evidently dazzled by him. In Ali there met him no Zeluco of romance but of political life, who never bridling his passions and always asserting without control his individuality mounted to his high and dreaded position from the condition of a poor freebooter, and scarcely brooked a rival in the whole Turkish Empire.' 'Napoleon,' he says, 'has twice offered to make him King of Epirus, but he prefers the English interest and abhors the French, as he himself told me.' Napoleon sent him a snuff-box with his portrait: 'the box,' he says, 'is very well, but the picture he could have dispensed with, since he neither liked it nor the original.' Even without Napoleon's co-operation, and the title of king, Ali was in

[1] Dallas' *Correspondence*, i. 103. Byron says (*Medwin's Conversations*, p. 119), that during his residence in Albania a young girl was stoned to death, on account of a love affair with a Neapolitan, although she was in the fourth month of her pregnancy. The Neapolitan was sent to a town where the plague was raging, to which he speedily fell a victim. Byron had once thought of founding a tale upon this story, but it was too terrible.

reality all but supreme monarch of Epirus or Albania, and K. Mendelssohn Bartholdy sees in him the man who broke with the feudalism of the Middle Ages and became the pioneer of civilisation in the form of modern absolutism. Ali's ceaseless efforts to acquire power, his contempt of custom, the mysterious *nimbus* with which he loved to surround his person, and perhaps too his thirst for revenge —all these corresponded to similar emotions in Byron. The position, too, in which he stood to religion had its counterpart in Byron; like the latter, he greatly respected the views of free-thinkers, though he was not free from superstition. Ali subsequently showed that he had not forgot his young English guest; through Dr. Holland, he sent to Byron, in 1813, a Latin letter beginning with the friendly address, 'Excellentissime necnon carissime,' and ending with an order for a gun he wanted made for himself.[1] Ali's death was in harmony with his life: attacked by the troops of the Grand Signior, he was beheaded (February, 1822), and his head was sent to Constantinople to be stuck up there on the gate of the Seraglio. A speculative merchant of Constantinople endeavoured to purchase it, in order to consign it to a London showman; this plan was, however, frustrated by a faithful servant of the Pacha, who bribing the executioner with a higher price, saved his master's head from this disgrace, and gave it decent burial.

Ali Pacha furnished Byron with letters of introduction, with guides, and an armed escort for the return journey through Janina to Salora. In order to avoid some robber-bands, Byron and his retinue at the latter place embarked on board a war galliot, which had been placed at his command, to convey them to Prevesa. They had scarcely,

[1] See Moore's *Life*, ii. 242.

however, got under sail before a storm arose, which, owing to the incapacity of the Turkish captain and his sailors, exposed the vessel to the greatest danger. The captain stood wringing his hands and weeping. Being asked whether he could not return to land, he answered: 'If it pleases God;' whether he could not make Corfu, 'If it pleases God,' was again his truly Turkish answer.[1] Still worse was the conduct of Byron's servant Fletcher, who resigned himself with piteous lamentations to 'a watery grave' (as he pathetically expressed it), and refused to be consoled by his master.[2] Byron, unable to render any assistance and tired with his attempts at consolation, wrapt himself in his Albanian capote, laid down on the deck, and, in spite of the raging of the elements and of men, fell fast asleep, and awoke to find the danger had passed away. Happily they were driven on shore in the Bay of Fanari, in the neighbourhood of Suli, where in a village called Volondorako they were hospitably received and entertained. The chief of this place persistently refused to accept money: 'I wish you to love me, not to pay me,' he said, and petitioned only for a written testimony as to his conduct.[3] The next station was Prevesa, from whence it had been their intention to proceed in another war galliot to Patras; but Byron declining to trust himself again to a Turkish vessel, preferred to make the journey by land. He considered it advisable, however, on account of the above-mentioned robber-bands, to provide himself with a strong escort of armed Albanians, whom he dismissed when he arrived at Missolonghi. Accompanied by these he crossed the Gulf of Atra to Vonitza, and thence to Utraikey, a lonely village on the seacoast, where that night-scene took place which

[1] See Hobhouse's *Albania*, i. 158.
[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 206.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 209.

the poet in 'Childe Harold' has painted in unfading colours.[1] Properly speaking, Utraikey consisted only of a custom-house and a barrack intended for the reception of soldiers, surrounded on the land side by a high wall, the gates of which were shut at nightfall. Here fires were kindled, a goat was killed and roasted, and, after an almost Homeric supper, the Albanians performed their Pyrrhic war-dance, accompanied by the song Tambourgi, Tambourgi. He makes his robbers sing:

> Since the days of our prophet the crescent ne'er saw
> A chief ever glorious like Ali Pashaw;

and rightly from his point of view, for at any rate he owed to Ali the security he enjoyed amid such bands in this spot, so remote and so suggestive of crime. The travellers, here as elsewhere, found scarcely any of the comforts of civilised life; a stable often served them as a place of shelter, their Albanian capotes for beds, and their saddles for pillows: their hardships never however interfered with that good humour so becoming in travellers, which Byron has so vigorously expressed in the introduction to the 'Siege of Corinth.' Thus they journeyed through Katuna, Makala, Natolico to Missolonghi (where they arrived November 21), and from thence to Patras, which then lay half in ruins. After a residence there of about fourteen days, they proceeded (December 4) to Vostizza, whence they again returned (December 14) to the northern shore of the Gulf of Lepanto. They visited Crisso and Delphi (Castri), rode up Mount Parnassus, with which they were disappointed, drank of the Castalian Fount, and from Livadia visited the cave of Trophonius, and the battlefield of Chæronea. They then proceeded to Thebes, and on Christmas-eve (1809) reached the ruins

[1] Canto ii. st. 67, *et seq.*

of Phyle, whence they saw Athens, the object of their longings, and the mountains of Ægina lying in the blue mist.

But neither archæological nor topographical pursuits had brought Byron to Athens; Athens was to him then what Rome was at a later period, a mere theme on which to build his views of history, or a well-spring whence to draw his poetic inspirations. But though he saw things from this point of view, the incomparable remains of antiquity filled him with admiration and awe. Who does not remember how in 'Childe Harold' and the 'Curse of Minerva' he execrates the plundering of those monuments, not pausing to consider whether the master-works of Greek art had not thereby been preserved for posterity. In the same spirit he visited the classical spots of Attica, Colonos, Eleusis, Mount Hymettus, Cape Colonna (which excited his interest also as the scene of Falconer's Shipwreck),[1] the marble quarries of Pentelicon, and the battlefield of Marathon, the plain of which was offered to him for sale for the sum of 16,000 piastres. 'Was the dust of Miltiades worth no more?'—he exclaims.[2] The beauties of Nature, not less than the memories of history, charmed the soul of Byron. 'Greece'—so he writes to his mother—'particularly in the vicinity of Athens, is delightful—cloudless skies and lovely landscapes.'[3] His letters, however, give us not the most distant conception of the profound impression which Greece made upon him. It is in his poems we see this; the descriptions and tales relative to Greece which we have among them are among the most beautiful that ever flowed from his pen: the celebrated lines at the commencement of the 'Giaour'

[1] Note to *Childe Harold*, ii. 86. Compare also *Letter on Bowles' Strictures on Pope*, vi. 359.

[2] Note to *Childe Harold*, ii. 89.

[3] *Ibid.* i. 314.

and 'Bride of Abydos,' and the ode in the third canto of 'Don Juan,'—

> The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung,

occur at once to the memory. By no other modern poet has Greece been sung with such sublimity and enthusiasm as by Byron.

But as usual, the state of society and, above all, women, occupied the attention of Byron. He lodged with the widow of the English Vice-consul Macri, who in her reduced circumstances supported herself and her three daughters, Theresa, Katinka, and Mariana, by letting her apartments to strangers, especially to the English; but who, notwithstanding, enjoyed an unimpeachable character of respectability. These girls, young and beautiful after the genuine Greek type, quickly fired the heart of Byron. In accordance with the oriental mode of professing love, he once, in the presence of one of them, gashed his breast with his dagger; an act, however, which she took very calmly, accepting it as a homage due to her beauty, but which in no degree moved her to any display of feeling.[1] It was to the eldest that he addressed the well-known poem:—

> Maid of Athens, ere we part,
> Give, oh give me back my heart!

According to Galt, who again, about the end of February, joined our travellers at Athens, she was pale, with regular Greek features, and of a somewhat pensive expression.[2]

His stay in Athens would probably have been still longer extended, if a desirable passage to Smyrna in the English sloop of war 'Pylades' had not been offered to

[1] See note in Moore's *Life*, i. 320.
[2] *Life of Lord Byron*, p. 119.

the travellers. At Smyrna Byron was received into the house of the English Consul, and finished there (March 28) the second canto of 'Childe Harold;' the first he began, October 31, 1809, at Janina. The only excursion which he undertook from thence was to the ruins of Ephesus, which, however, made no very warm impression upon him; at least they never called forth a poetical echo in his works. He proceeded (April 14) to Constantinople on board the English frigate 'Salsette,' which came to anchor at Tenedos, near the entrance of the Dardanelles under Cape Janissary, and there, for more than fourteen days, awaited the firman to permit their entrance into the Bosphorus. Byron employed this leisure in an excursion to Troy, and (May 3) swam across the Dardanelles from Sestos to Abydos; a feat of which throughout his life he was inordinately proud. He was accompanied by a lieutenant of the ship, Mr. Ekenhead, who swam the distance in an hour and five minutes, while Byron himself took five minutes longer. The main difficulty lies, as is well known, in the strength of the current, and those who had hitherto attempted it maintain that it is impossible, on account of this current, to swim from the Asiatic side to the European. Byron, however, insisted that there was no difference between the two directions, and that he had proved the possibility of Leander's heroic deed. The exertion and the cold of the water brought on, however, a fever of several days' duration. Byron loved such feats of swimming, and was proud of his performances in this line. In Portugal he swam from Lisbon across the Tagus to Belem; and at Venice, in the year 1818, he had a swimming match with a Mr. Scott, in the presence of a great crowd of spectators, against a celebrated Italian swimmer, from the Lido to the City, and through the Great Canal to the Lagune of Fusina;

during which he was four hours and twenty minutes in the water. The Italian never reached even the Piazza of St. Mark. Among the gondoliers and fishermen of Venice Byron was called from this 'il pesce Inglese.'[1]

On landing at Constantinople on the evening of May 13, the travellers were particularly struck with the darkness of the city, and its unexpected stillness, arising chiefly from the absence of all wheel carriages. Next morning on their way to the principal Frank hotel in Pera, a similar spectacle presented itself to them as at Janina: they saw a corpse lying in the street gnawed by dogs—a terrible spectacle, which Byron, in the 'Siege of Corinth,' reproduced in fearful colours. The impression usually made by Constantinople lost some of its effect on Byron from the knowledge he already had of Turkish cities; yet the incomparable beauty of the site exercised on him its magical spell:—

> The European with the Asian shore
> Sprinkled with palaces; the ocean stream
> Here and there studded with a seventy-four;
> Sophia's cupola with golden gleam;
> The cypress groves; Olympus high and hoar;
> The twelve isles and the more than I could dream,
> Far less describe, ...
> . . . . . .[2]

The descriptions of the slave market and the Seraglio, which Byron sketched in 'Don Juan,' were founded, to a very small extent, on personal observation. He failed not, indeed, to visit the slave market, but, according to

[1] Marquis de Salvo, *Lord Byron en Italie et en Grèce* (Londres et Paris, 1823, p. 81). Trelawney depreciates Byron's performances in swimming; he says that Byron was generally exhausted, while he himself hardly felt the exertion. Byron too had not the least knowledge of sea-life, not even of sea-terms, although from his writings it might appear that he had; that the employment of sea-terms cost him much toil and labour.—*Recollections*, p. 106.

[2] *Don Juan*, v. 3.

Galt,[1] there were so few slaves that it would be an error to call it a market in the proper sense, and the scene was very uninteresting. In the Seraglio Byron was present only in the retinue of the English Ambassador, Mr. Adair, when the latter had an audience with the Sultan to take leave. On this occasion he asserted his rank in a boyish, not to say in a childish, spirit, claiming not only the place of precedence, but even a separate presentation to the Sultan, which the Ambassador according to subsisting usages could not grant. Byron regarded this a personal injury, so that Mr. Adair was compelled to refer him to the Austrian Internuncio, whose decision was given against Byron.[2]

The 'Salsette,' which had been appointed to bring back the Ambassador to England, set sail July 24. Byron and Hobhouse again embarked in her, the latter, in compliance with the wishes of his friends, to return home, the former to his beloved Greece. After a voyage of only four days Byron caused himself to be landed on the island of Zea, and immediately set out for Athens, while the frigate continued her voyage without interruption. At Athens Byron found an old University friend, the Marquis of Sligo, in company with whom some days later he travelled to Corinth, whence the Marquis proceeded to Tripolitza, Byron himself to Patras, in order to settle some business there with the English Consul-General, Mr. Strané, who appears to have managed his affairs during his travels. During the next month he made frequent expeditions from Athens through the Morea (to Argos, Napoli, &c.), and paid a visit to Vely Pacha, a son of Ali, at Tripolitza. Here he was received with not less distinction than at Tepeleni, and the Pacha, when he

[1] *Life of Byron*, p. 140. [2] Moore's *Life*, i. 336.

took leave, presented him with a beautiful stallion. In September we find him again in Patras, where for the first time he was attacked with the marsh-fever, which fourteen years later, almost within sight of this town, was the cause of his death. His native servants, whom he always praises greatly, nursed him, in their way, to the utmost of their power, and threatened to cut the throat of his physician, if he did not restore their master within a certain time. In consequence of this threat, the physician, to Byron's joy, did not show himself again, and to this circumstance, as well as to his refusal to take any medicine, Byron ascribed his recovery.

At Athens—where during this second visit Byron did not reside at the house of the Vice-consul's widow and of her fair daughters, but in a Franciscan monastery[1]—he devoted his time to the study of modern Greek[2] and to the composition of his two poems 'Hints from Horace,' and 'The Curse of Minerva,' without however intending to publish the latter. On the contrary, he expressly says, that he had done with authorship, and that he had cured himself of the disease of scribbling.[3] He passed some pleasant days also in the society of the Marquis of Sligo, Bruce, the English Consul, and Lady Hester Stanhope. The two latter just arrived from England, had from their ship seen Byron at Cape Colonna swimming alone in the sea, and were afterwards introduced to him by the Marquis of Sligo. His acquaintance with 'the Maid of Athens' appears to have been completely broken off. His heart, which ever craved for some object to love, he

[1] Sometimes he calls it a Franciscan, at other times a Capuchin monastery.

[2] See *Remarks on the Romaic or Modern Greek Language, with Specimens and Translations*, vii. 341, *et seq.*

[3] Letter to his Mother, Moore's *Life*, i. 352.

seems to have given to a poor youth of the name of Nicolo Giraud, the son of a widow, in whom, as in Eddlestone at Cambridge, he took an almost brotherly interest, and to whom he intended to leave a considerable legacy.[1] An adventure similar to that on which 'The Giaour' is founded here occurred,—the foundation of a rumour which connected him with a romantic love affair. Returning one day from bathing in the Piræus he met a body of Turkish soldiers dragging to the shore a girl sewn up in a sack, in order to drown her, according to the sentence of the Waywode, for an amour with a Frank. Discovering their purpose, Byron, with pistol in hand, compelled the barbarians to return with him to the Aga, from whom, partly by threats, partly by bribes, he succeeded in obtaining the pardon of the girl, under the condition that she should leave Athens. Byron sent her the same night to Thebes, where she found a safe place of refuge. Galt insinuates[2] that Byron himself was the Giaour with whom she had committed the offence; Lord Sligo,[3] however, who at Byron's request committed to paper all he had heard in Athens of the event, is silent on this point, while Hobhouse asserts that Byron's Turkish servant was the lover of this girl; and Byron himself remarks on another occasion, that in the matter of intrigue he had frequently to complain of his people. In other respects he was as satisfied with his native servants as he was dissatisfied with his valet Fletcher. 'His perpetual lamentations after beef and beer, the stupid, bigoted contempt for everything foreign, and insurmountable incapacity of acquiring even a few words of any language, rendered him, like all other English servants, an incumbrance. I do assure you, the plague of speaking for him,

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 349; ii. 43, *et seq.*
[2] *Life of Byron*, p. 158.
[3] Compare the letter of the Marquis in Moore's *Life*, ii. 180.

the comforts he required (more than myself by far), the pillaws (a Turkish dish of rice and meat) which he could not eat, the wines he could not drink, the beds where he could not sleep, and the long list of calamities, such as stumbling horses, want of tea! &c., which assailed him, would have made a lasting source of laughter to a spectator and inconvenience to a master.'[1] Byron, on the other hand, knew well how to accommodate himself to the discomforts and privations of travelling, and to all foreign usages and modes of life. He was especially delighted with Athens, and the prolongation and continuance of his travels constantly occupied his thoughts. Under the date February 28, 1811, he communicates to his mother, that he has received a firman for a journey to Egypt, and that he proposes to set out thither in the spring. His next letter to his mother, however, instead of being dated, as might have been expected, from Alexandria, is written on board the 'Volage' frigate (June 25), and in this he announces his impending return.

The cause of this sudden change in his purpose must be sought in the embarrassed state of his fortune, which was so reduced—partly, indeed, through his own fault—that in his absence there had been an execution on Newstead for a debt of 1,500*l.*[2] During his travels it would seem as if he had received very irregular and scanty remittances. He frequently complains of his London man of business, Mr. Hanson, from whom, in spite of repeated entreaties to write to him, he had received not one letter for a whole year. The postal communications of those days were insufficient, indeed, when compared with those of the present day; Malta was the last real post-office, and from thence everything was left to casual and uncertain oppor-

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 351. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 11.

tunities. Hanson urged him to the sale of Newstead; Byron rebelled against the proposal, adding that, if it must be alienated, he would end his days in a foreign country, for Newstead was the only tie he had to England. Enough—Byron saw himself compelled to return home, because he wanted the means for the further prosecution of his travels, and because his involved circumstances demanded his presence in London. With what feelings he began the homeward journey under these circumstances may easily be conceived. Disgust, vexation, and profound dissatisfaction seem to have mastered him. 'Indeed' (so he writes to his friend Hodgson during the voyage) 'my prospects are not very pleasant. Embarrassed in my private affairs, indifferent to public, solitary without the wish to be social, with a body a little enfeebled by a succession of fevers, but a spirit, I trust, yet unbroken, I am returning home without a hope, and almost without a desire. The first thing I shall have to encounter will be a lawyer, the next a creditor, then colliers, farmers, surveyors, and all the agreeable attachments to estates out of repair and contested coalpits. In short, I am sick and sorry, and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march, either to campaign in Spain, or back again to the East, where I can at least have cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence.'[1] He begs his mother to get his apartments at Newstead ready, where he means to live in complete retirement; his books only he bids her take care of, and reminds her to leave him a few bottles of champagne.[2]

How Byron reached Malta is nowhere mentioned; we learn only that the above-named Giraud accompanied him thither. After another attack of tertian fever at Malta,

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 354.

[2] Dallas' *Correspondence*, ii. 12, 27.

he embarked in the 'Volage' frigate, which sailed for England on June 3, and came to anchor in the Thames in the beginning of July, his pilgrimage having lasted two years and some days. On his arrival in London he found it impossible to tear himself from it so quickly as he had contemplated. What, beside matters of business, detained him there will be related in the next chapter. On the 23rd he wrote to his mother, that he was kept very much against his will in London, but promised to come to her as soon as possible. A few days later he suddenly received accounts of her dangerous illness; he hastened as quickly as possible in his carriage with four horses to Newstead, but received on the road the news of her death. Mrs. Byron, inclined always to superstition, had for some time cherished the fancy, that possibly she would not live till the return of her son: 'If I should be dead,' she remarked to her maid when she received the account of his safe arrival at London, 'before Byron comes down, what a strange thing it would be!'[1] She had felt for some time unwell, and her excessive corpulence always in itself excited apprehension. Her death is said to have been brought on by a fit of anger, into which she had been thrown by an upholsterer's account. She died August 1, and the next day her son reached Newstead. Although his grief was manifested in a peculiar manner, it was greater than might have been expected from his relations to such a mother. Death asserted its reconciling power, and Byron now saw 'that we can only have one mother.'[2] On the evening after his arrival, his mother's waiting-woman, passing by the room where the corpse lay, heard sounds as if some one were sighing heavily within. On entering, she found, to her astonishment, Byron sitting [illegible] dark beside the bed. On her representing to him

[1] Moore's Life, ii. 31. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 32.

that he should not yield so far to grief, he burst into tears and said: 'Oh I had but one friend in the world, and she is gone!'[1] This was the natural Byron; but as soon as he again appeared in public, he reassumed his artificial demeanour. He could not bring himself to follow his mother to the grave, dreading, perhaps, to be overcome with grief before others, and to appear unmanly; he remained standing at the Abbey gate, and watched the procession until it disappeared. He then called young Rushton, and made him fetch the boxing-gloves; and with a violent effort proceeded to his usual sparring exercise. But the strain was too great; he was obliged to fling away the gloves and retire to his own room.

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 34.

CHAPTER V.

LONDON.

1811–1815.

Byron was now entirely without family ties, his half-sister, at this period of his life, for him hardly existing. We do not hear that she manifested any feeling at the death of her step-mother, or sympathised with the grief of her brother. She does not seem to have regarded herself as a member of the Byron family, but to have identified herself with that of her mother, in which she was educated and brought up. She was married in 1807 to her cousin, afterwards Colonel Leigh,[1] but it was only at a later period that she entered into more intimate and sisterly relations with her brother. The desolation of his condition Byron felt the more deeply, as the day after the death of his mother he was shocked by the news, that his friend Matthews had been drowned in the Cam. His Harrow friend Wingfield had died in May at Coimbra, as he learned shortly before setting out for Newstead, and poor Eddlestone succumbed a few weeks later to consumption. It was Byron's misfortune, that all the persons to whom at this period his affectionate nature clung, either shunned him, or were snatched from him by an early death. He spent those days at Newstead in great depression, although Scrope Davies at his invitation came to visit him there. 'We have nothing new to say on any

[1] His mother was a daughter of Admiral Byron.

subject'—he writes to Dallas [1]—'and yawn at each other in a sort of *quiet inquietude*.' In a letter to Hodgson [2] he says: 'My days are listless and my nights restless; I have very seldom any society, and when I have I run out of it.' When in October he lost by death another person dear to him, of whom nothing further is known, he poured forth his grief at all these losses in the poem 'To Thyrza.'[3] The desolation of his feelings is expressed most bitterly and with an intensity bordering on mental aberration in the will which he now caused to be drawn up, some provisions of a former one having become void by the death of his mother. He repeats emphatically the provision 'that my body may be buried in the vault of the garden of Newstead, without any ceremony or religious service whatever; and that no inscription, save my name and age, be written on the tomb or tablet: and it is my will that my faithful dog may not be removed from the said vault.'[4] In answer to the objections of his man of business, Mr. Bolton of Nottingham, he alleges that the garden was already consecrated ground, and that by this, as he hopes, the conscience of his sorrowing relations should be set at rest.[5] In such a state of feeling it was anything but a relief to his mind, rather a new source of torment to him, that, in the last days of September, he had to repair, in company with Hanson, to his coal mines in Lancashire; and great was his joy when, towards the end of October, he could escape from his desolate Newstead, to return by way of Cambridge to London, to which he was fortunately summoned by business relating not to his property, but to his poetry.

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 66.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 77.
[3] See the note on this poem, ix. 13.
[4] Moore's *Life*, ii. 45.
[5] In a letter to the above-named man of business, he speaks even of his carcase, *Ibid.* 47.

The first to welcome Byron after his landing l
Dallas, to whom he had announced his app
arrival by a letter written on board the frigate '
In the course of their conversation, Dallas made
as to the poetical fruits of his travels, and Byro
resolution never again to publish had already bee
to the winds, and indeed had taken quite an
direction, gave him the 'Hints from Horace,'
imitation of the 'Ars Poetica,' which he regard
continuation of the 'English Bards and Scotch Re
and from which he expected a considerable increa
fame. After the success which he had achieved
of opinion that satire was his forte.[2] With the p
the 'Hints from Horace' Dallas was, however, m
appointed, and could not refrain from repeating
the question whether this were, indeed, the only
of his muse. 'Upon this Byron told me that
occasionally written short poems, besides a great
of stanzas in Spenser's measure, relative to the c
he had visited. "They are not worth troubling y
but you shall have them all if you like." . . .
they had been read but by one person,[3] who ha
very little to commend, and much to condemn;
himself was of that opinion, and he was sure I
be so too. Such as it was, however, it was at my s
These were the two first cantos of 'Childe
Dallas on reading them was again disappointed,
appointed in the most pleasing manner, and wr
same evening to Byron. 'You have written one
most delightful poems I ever read . . . I would

[1] See Moore's *Life*, ii. 12. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 14.
[3] The person is unknown. Hobhouse, on whom naturally
rested, protests against the imputation. Perhaps it was the M
Sligo. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 15.

my life on its advancing the reputation of your poetical powers, and on its gaining you great honour and regard, if you will do me the credit and favour of attending to my suggestions, &c.'[1] There are, indeed, many examples of false estimates of poetical compositions, which have been formed, not only by their authors but by their contemporaries; but the instance of Byron is the most remarkable and in many respects the most inexplicable. To the praise of his kinsman Byron gave but little credence and wished rather to see the 'Hints' published, and the sooner the better; an agreement at his urgent request was even made with Cawthorn for their publication. Dallas, on the other hand, exerted all his powers of eloquence to obtain Byron's consent to the proposal that the 'Hints' should not appear till 'Childe Harold' had seen the light.[2] Hobhouse, indeed, asserts that this statement by no means agrees with what Byron himself had expressed to him as to his readiness to publish 'Childe Harold;' yet it would seem as if the merit of having directed the poet in this matter by his counsel must not be denied to Dallas. It is idle to conjecture as to the form Byron's poetical career might have assumed had the 'Hints from Horace' appeared before 'Childe Harold.' Moore thinks that, in this case, he would have been lost, as a great poet, to the world; that the failure of this paraphrase would have been certain, that the victims of his 'English Bards' would have fallen upon him, and that in the bitterness of his heart he would have committed the immortal 'Childe Harold' to the flames.[3] Professor Wilson, on the other hand, remarks that the 'Hints' might, perhaps, have fallen dead-born from the press; but still Byron's enemies would have gained no advantage over

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 15. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 16. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 27.

him; 'for men who have been flayed alive, do not like to wrestle,' and that, had they attacked him, Byron would, according to the rule *facit indignatio versum*, have utterly crushed them in a second satire. Dallas, who at first was proud of having, to a certain extent, discovered 'Childe Harold,' lamented on his death-bed[1] that he had been instrumental in the publication of it, since thereby the foundation of Byron's moral overthrow had been laid. Though his intentions were good, the intellect of Dallas was of the narrowest character, and his chief concern, in his editorial functions, was the obliteration of all offences against religion and politics contained in the poem, and in bringing down Byron in these respects to the common beaten path. He protested, for example, long and stoutly, against the opinion expressed in the third stanza of the second canto—

> Religions take their turn:
> 'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's—and other creeds
> Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
> Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds;
> Poor child of doubt and death, whose life is built on reeds.

because there is one true Religion.[2] No adjustment was possible between the height of Byron's and the pettiness of Dallas's point of view, so that Byron at last begged his kinsman, who wished to play the part of Mentor, without any circumlocution, henceforth to drop metaphysics in his letters.[3] Dallas, desirous of freeing himself from all complicity with his views, at last contented himself by making a formal protest against the impiety of the young poet.[4] To suggestions in the matter of style and to other advice, Byron showed himself more accessible. He approved, for example, that his name should be

[1] See the last chapter, by his son, of the *Recollections*, p. 341.
[2] See *Recollections*, p. 124.
[3] Moore's *Life*, ii. 70.
[4] See the Formal Protest, *Recollections*, p. 124.

placed on the title-page, and altered 'Childe Burun' into 'Childe Harold,' because, according to his own words, he did not wish that Harold's character should be identified with his own; though such, originally, had certainly been his design. Through Dallas's mediation, Mr. Murray, at that time comparatively unknown as a publisher, undertook the publication of 'Childe Harold,' while that of the 'Hints' was from time to time postponed, and at last withdrawn. At a later period at Ravenna, Byron reverted to the publication of this paraphrase, but was again induced to desist, so that, in fact, it first saw the light after his death. From publishing the 'Curse of Minerva' he also for the present desisted after much urgent persuasion. In the negotiations with the publisher and printer Byron did not concern himself—this doubtless would have conflicted with the consciousness of his rank—but handed over this *partie honteuse* to the commoner Dallas; to whom, in gratitude for his services, he presented the *honorarium* (600*l.*), having made the resolution—which however he afterwards altered—to receive no pay for his works. He was very indignant however, with Mr. Murray, for having shown the manuscript to Gifford; even Gifford's unbounded commendation could not appease his wrath at this. Having praised Gifford in his 'English Bards,' whom he ever regarded as his Magnus Apollo, he saw in this reference an unworthy *captatio benevolentiæ*, about which he was very sensitive.

While Childe Harold was going slowly through the press, Byron became acquainted with Thomas Moore. By an allusion in the 'English Bards' to his much ridiculed bloodless duel[1] with Jeffrey, Moore had felt himself

[1] 'In going out to Chalk Farm, the place of meeting, the ball is said to have fallen out of one of the pistols and to have been lost; the seconds having no other ammunition at hand, there was nothing to be done but

aggrieved, inasmuch as he
been given to an explanation
that affair. When, therefor
name in the second edition,
from Dublin, on January 1,
while, begun his pilgrimage,
Mr. Hodgson to be despatched
tionally never done. Thus a
during which Moore had son
besides had become a family ma
siderably modified his views on
return, he felt the necessity of
peaceful termination, and all
residing in London, and foresaw
Byron in society.[1] Utterly in t
his first letter, Moore wrote aga
grounds of his offence. He rec
tion which he regarded as sa
Moore's original fire-eating pur
tenderness. 'We Irishmen,' he
nesses of this kind seldom kno

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medium between

to draw the ball from the other pistol. The principals, who knew nothing of this, fired without bullets.'—*Medwin's Conversations*, p. 217, 2nd edition, London, 1824.

> 'Health to great Jeffrey! Heaven preserve his life,
> To flourish on the fertile shores of Fife,
> And guard it sacred in its future wars,
> Since authors sometimes seek the field of Mars!
> Can none remember that eventful day,
> That ever-glorious, almost fatal fray,
> When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
> And Bow Street myrmidons stood laughing by?'

The presence of the police is not explained by the version given above.

[1] Moore's real place of residence at this time was at Ashbourne in Derbyshire, not far from Newstead, which, to Byron's regret, Moore had never visited.

[2] See Moore's *Life*, ii. 86.

decided hostility and decided friendship.' This was music to Byron's ears, especially as he professed himself an enthusiastic admirer of his poems. Moore already enjoyed a recognised reputation as a poet, moved in the best aristocratic circles, was no didactic preacher like Dallas, but an easy-going man of the world, and a thorough gentleman. Byron declared his readiness to meet him personally, and at Moore's own suggestion, Rogers invited them both to dinner, Thomas Campbell being the only other person present. From that moment the sympathies between Byron and Moore grew rapidly to intimacy and ripened, as is well known, into a lifelong friendship.

Through Rogers also Byron became acquainted with Lord Holland. He was now preparing the speech—his maiden speech—which he delivered in the House of Lords (on the Nottingham Frame-breaking Bill), and Rogers, to whom he had communicated his design of taking part in the debate, sought for him the advice of Lord Holland. In spite of the bitter verses on himself and Lady Holland in the 'English Bards,' Lord Holland hastened to comply with this request. Byron returned thanks by letter, and after a short correspondence, their personal acquaintance, which was introduced by a visit of Lord Holland to Byron, took place. The very kindness and leniency with which not only Lord Holland, but Moore, Scott, and others forgave his attacks, thus heaping coals of fire on his head, made him repent of his satire, and when the fifth edition was about to appear, he caused the whole impression to be burnt.[1] Dallas, who was so ready to assume a property

[1] Byron at a later period (March 31, 1815), sent an apology to Coleridge and endeavoured to atone for his attack. (See Moore's *Life*, iii. 159.) Only he would not for a long time hear anything of a reconciliation with Lord Carlisle. With one of those who were attacked, Colonel Greville, he was at this time nearly involved in a duel, although Byron in his case had been moderate, and had the right moreover on his side.

in Byron, resented this act of suppression, originating, as he considered, in love to his 'new friends,'[1] and felt altogether ill at ease with his relations to Holland House. Byron's suppression of the 'Hints,' which were actually in print, Dallas ascribed also to the influence of the Hollands, which, to his vexation, was thus seen to be more potent than his own. Henceforward Byron became a frequent and welcome guest at Holland House, that famous rendezvous of all the talents and magnates in politics, literature, and art. 'Here,' says Macaulay—while he pays his tribute to the grace and the kindness with which the princely hospitality of that mansion was dispensed,—'here in one corner the last debate was discussed, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Reynolds's Baretti, Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation, and Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxemburg, or his ride with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz.'[2] This description refers, indeed, to a somewhat later period; in Byron's time, besides himself, the stars who specially shone there were Moore, Thomas Campbell, Sheridan, and Rogers.

To return to Byron's maiden speech: it was a decided success. Dallas, who had accompanied Byron when he first took his seat in the Upper House, was again present. But on this occasion Byron would not have felt himself abandoned even had he been absent. All the members of the House of Lords who were acquainted with him congratulated him, others sought to be introduced to him. Sir Francis Burdett said of his speech 'that it was the

Moore, however, adjusted the matter (ii. 139-141). An impression, however, of the satire appeared in Ireland. Dallas, iii. 36.

[1] *Recollections*, p. 243.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxiii. p. 568.

best speech by a lord since the Lord knows when.' Lord Granville thought that the structure of the periods recalled Burke, and Lord Holland prophesied that he would surpass all of them, if he only persevered. Sheridan, also, was of the same opinion. The speech had been carefully prepared beforehand, and committed to memory; the delivery, as Byron himself says and others corroborate, was loud and fluent enough, but somewhat theatrical.[1] The subject—the destruction of the improved frames by the Nottingham weavers, who by the introduction of these had lost employment and bread—was one in which Byron felt peculiarly interested, and as a good Whig he boldly took up 'the starving and despairing masses,' although, as might have been expected from his youth, in a very rhetorical manner; so that he fears lest Lord Holland should think him half a frame-breaker himself.[2] 'I spoke,' so he writes to Hodgson, 'very violent sentences with a sort of modest impudence, abused everything and everybody, and put the Lord Chancellor very much out of humour.'[3] It may here be added that Byron appeared as a speaker in the Upper House only on two other occasions: in the debate on Lord Donoughmore's motion for a committee on the Roman Catholic Claims, April 12, 1812 (he spoke and voted for it), and in the debate on Major Cartwright's petition, on June 1, 1813.[4] On both these occasions he had little or no success; his delivery was still more declamatory and theatrical than when he first spoke, with the same singing tone, which was the defect also of his poetical recitation, and which had been the

[1] See Moore's *Life*, ii. 130. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 124. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 130.

[4] The three speeches were edited and published by Dallas with the title: 'The Parliamentary Speeches of Lord Byron, printed from the copies prepared by his Lordship for publication. London, 1824.' They are also to be found in the sixth volume of the edition of the *Life and Works*, p. 341 *et seq.*, referred to in this translation.

fashion at Harrow. In the third speech he so mouthed, that it did not escape his own observation, and he afterwards spoke jestingly of it to Moore.[1] His speaking was not considered sufficiently dignified for the Upper House, but more suited to the House of Commons. In order to become a parliamentary orator, he must have spared neither labour nor self-discipline to attain perfection; but such a course was unsuited to his character. In this sphere he would never have attained excellence; so he thought after these first attempts, and thus left the hopes and wishes of teachers and friends unfulfilled. Poetry, moreover, soon so exclusively occupied him, that he felt but little inclination for parliamentary life and the career of a statesman.

Two days after the delivery of his maiden speech, which, like the blast of a trumpet, served to announce his poem, 'Childe Harold' was at length published. Though in a life, like Byron's, so full of turning-points, it would be difficult to specify any one in particular, as more decisive than the other, yet, surely, the appearance of 'Childe Harold' must be regarded as the most momentous. If he had any one master-passion which determined his whole life, it was the love of fame; and now, almost to his own surprise, he suddenly discovered the field on which he could gratify this passion to the fullest extent, and with the least expenditure of toil. The latter point is by no means to be left out of consideration; the nearly two hundred Spenserian stanzas of which the poem when it was first published was composed, he had, so to speak, extemporised, while on his very first appearance in Parliament he had discovered, that he had not only to master a copious body of facts, but to consider the most appropriate form of turning them to account, and that

[1] *Life of Lord Byron*, ii. 207.

even a nobleman could not succeed in playing a political part without the faculty of labour, which was utterly foreign to his nature. The success of 'Childe Harold' was so decisive, that Byron summed it up in the words, 'I awoke one morning and found myself famous.' Lord Byron and 'Childe Harold' were the idols of the day, the theme of every conversation, yea, almost an historical event. The first edition was sold off in a few days. The fearless and frank individuality of character, which expressed itself in that poem with a freedom reckless of consequences, on all political, religious, and social questions, was pre-eminently in harmony with the state of men's minds at that period. 'Childe Harold,' even in its complete form, is no finished whole, no work of art in the higher sense; the requisite repose and depth were wanting alike for the creation and for the enjoyment of such a work. It is a string of pearls of opinions and thoughts on questions of philosophy and politics in a brilliant and highly poetical setting, and what many scarcely ventured to think, they found there set forth in bold and lofty expression. The dissatisfaction, so energetically uttered by the poet, on the part which England played in the affairs of the world, was felt and recognised with especial earnestness by a great part of the nation. With this was blended the fascination of a mysterious personality, which Byron had interwoven with his poetry; from the beginning he aimed at shrouding himself in a veil of mysterious interest, and at making the public the confidant of his sorrows. Much both of truth and falsehood on his domestic affairs, on the excesses of his life at Cambridge and Newstead, as well as about his travelling adventures in Albania and Greece, had already reached the ears of the world, and excited general curiosity. The 'respublica litteraria' was, moreover, deeply interested at seeing the young peer, who in

his bold satire had hurled the glove of defiance at the foot of the whole English Parnassus, himself descend into the literary arena, and contend for the laurel, for his first appearance in the 'Hours of Idleness' had been comparatively insignificant. His high rank in society naturally also contributed to increase the interest which was felt; even Byron could not conceal it from himself that a great portion of the unexampled applause he received was to be accounted for by this circumstance. His youth also, and his renowned personal beauty, contributed, especially among women, to heighten this result.

Not only was Byron's literary position for ever decided by 'Childe Harold,' but from that hour he became the cherished and petted darling of aristocratic society, of what in England is called 'high life.' He was, to use his own words, the lion of the year 1812. London lay, as Disraeli says, at the feet of a youth of three and twenty.[1] He lived in the very whirlpool of society, and on every side his vanity was fed and surfeited. He was introduced at a ball to the Prince Regent, at his royal Highness's request, who, as might have been expected, plied him with flattery, and expressed the desire to see him soon at Carlton House. With whatever indifference Byron might in his letters affect to view the honour thus conferred upon him, shortly after this introduction he was surprised by Dallas in the very act of going to a levée in full court dress and with powdered hair, and its accidental postponement alone prevented him from carrying out a purpose, which was in glaring contradiction with his avowed political and literary tendencies. Consistency and fidelity of conviction never, however, constituted his strength; and he was far too much entangled by the fascinations of the great world and gratified by the homage which it paid to

[1] *Venetia.*

him. Those were the palmy days of dandyism, under the auspices of 'the first gentleman in Europe,' which Byron himself has delineated so vigorously and pungently in the pages of his Journal. The follies of fashion were associated with a corruption of morals unparalleled since the days of Charles II. The pleasures of the table, balls, nights spent in dissipation, visits to the theatre, play and debts, affairs of gallantry, histories of seduction of the most licentious character, and duels arising from them, formed the life-business of this society and consequently of Byron, who became its victim. He says in one of his journals,[1] that he liked the Dandies, and that he stood high in the favour—as he mentions with evident satisfaction—of the famous Beau Brummel, the master of the guild of fools; he led, in short, the very life of a young nobleman, which he has drawn in few but masterly strokes in 'Don Juan' (xi. 73–75). Besides, however, this questionable side of 'high life,' Byron was brought into more or less intimate relations with many intellectual magnates and celebrities. In addition to the already mentioned visitors of Holland House, he frequented the society of Sir James Mackintosh, the statesman and historian; of Sir Humphry Davy, the inventor of the safety lamp; of the Edgeworth family, which had come on a visit to London, and formed a social central point of the year 1813; of Madame de Staël; of the distinguished Irishmen Curran and Grattan; of the dramatic author Colman and Kean the actor; of Southey, with whom at first he was much pleased; of Monk Lewis. Blücher also and Sir Hudson Lowe he met in society. Byron's judgments and remarks in his Journal on these different characters bear witness to his fine powers of observation and his knowledge of men; they are almost universally pertinent, and

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 232.

more indulgent and kindly than might have been expected. He was enchanted with Curran. 'Such imagination!' he exclaimed: 'there never was anything like it that ever I saw or heard of.'[1] 'I have heard that man speak more poetry than I have ever seen written, though I saw him seldom and but occasionally. I saw him presented to Madame de Staël at Mackintosh's; it was the grand confluence between the Rhone and the Saone, and they were both so d——d ugly, that I could not help wondering how the best intellects of France and Ireland could have taken up respectively such residences.'[2] One of the best intellects of England had, as he never forgot, in contrast with these sought out for itself a home the reverse of ugly! Byron's judgment on Sheridan is well known. 'Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the best of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy ("School for Scandal"), the *best* drama (in my mind, far before that St. Giles's lampoon the "Beggar's Opera"), the best farce ("The Critic," it is only too good for a farce), and the best address ("Monologue on Garrick"), and to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Begum Speech) ever conceived or heard of in this country.'[3] When this praise was told by some one next day to Sheridan, it caused him to shed tears.

Byron's relation with Sir Walter Scott may be mentioned in this place, although their personal acquaintance was not formed till the spring of the year 1813. Scott, one of the many who had been attacked in his youthful satire, was notwithstanding filled with admiration for 'Childe Harold' and the Poetical Tales, and commenced a corre-

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 234.
[2] Byron's *Memoranda apud Moore*, iii. 234.
[3] Moore's *Life*, ii. 303.

spondence with him. The two poets met at the house of Mr. Murray, which had long formed a rendezvous for many of the magnates of literature; and during this visit of Scott they saw each other almost daily, and were mutually attracted. Byron had a very high opinion of Scott's poetry, and read the Waverley romances with ever new delight. That he should respect Scott as a man, was a matter of course; this respect he afterwards expressed in words which can never be forgotten, in his celebrated letter to Beyle (Stendhal).[1] But Scott also, with a quick eye, recognised the nobler traits in Byron's character. His weaknesses, indeed, he had few opportunities of knowing by experience; but his perception of these never perverted his judgment in the estimate of his good qualities. This, indeed, he often showed, but especially in the tribute he paid to Byron after his death.[2] Scott presented his youthful rival with a valuable dagger inlaid with gold, which had belonged to Elfi Bey. Byron's present in return was a silver urn, filled with bones from graves at Athens, with inscriptions on two sides of the base. One ran thus;—'The bones contained in this urn were found in certain ancient sepulchres within the land walls of

[1] ['I have known Walter Scott long and well, and in occasional situations which call forth the real character—and I can assure you, that his character is worthy of admiration—that of all men he is the most open, the most honourable, the most amiable. With his politics I have nothing to do: they differ from mine, which renders it difficult for me to speak of them. But he is perfectly sincere in them; and sincerity may be humble, but she cannot be servile. I pray you, therefore, to correct or soften that passage. You may, perhaps, attribute this officiousness of mine to a false affectation of candour, as I happen to be a writer also. Attribute it to what motives you please, but believe the truth. I say, that Walter Scott is as nearly a thorough good man as man can be, because I know it by experience to be the case.'—*Byron's Letter to Beyle in the Appendix to Medwin's Conversations*, p. 459.]

[2] [First published in the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, 1824, and included in Scott's Misc. Prose Works, iv. 343-50.]

Athens, in the month of February 1811.' The other face bears the lines of Juvenal:—[1]

> Expende—quot libras in duce summo
> Invenies . . . .
> Mors sola fatetur
> Quantula sint hominum corpuscula.

The thought of what the world would say to the gloomy and ominous nature of their mutual gifts, afforded the two poets much merriment and laughter.

We now return to the period previous to Byron's marriage. In spite of his intercourse with these leading minds, Byron still felt the life he then led was not the soil on which the poetical aspirations of his youthful genius could be developed. His manner in society betrayed that, however richly his vanity was fed, its attractions were insufficient for his happiness. Although he formed the centre of a circle of admirers ready to do him homage, yet, as Moore his constant companion says, his better thoughts appeared to be elsewhere, and he looked with melancholy distraction on the crowds surrounding him, while in smaller and more intimate circles he was wont to yield himself to unrestrained cheerfulness. To ladies he showed always great gallantry, while to men his manner was haughty. His longings constantly turned towards Greece. Even before the actual publication of 'Childe Harold' Dallas and other friends pressed him to continue it; this, he replied, was impossible in England, he could only do it under the blue skies of Greece. The purpose of returning to the Morea or Asia constantly, therefore, presented itself to him. He dreamed of settling at Naxos or some one of the Greek islands; he even appears to have thought of a journey to Abyssinia. In the summer of 1813 he actually began preparations for a renewal of his travels. His library was advertised to be sold by

[1] Sat. x. 147.

auction,[1] and a passage to Greece on board a man-of-war (the 'Boyne'), was granted to him. He changed his mind, however, and put off the execution of his plan for two years. Instead of this, he proposed to make, in company with a friend, a tour in Holland; but this too came to nothing. Neither before nor even after his marriage, had he relinquished his plans for travelling. What really kept him at home was not so much the plague, then raging in the East more violently than usual, but the still embarrassed state of his fortune. His debts were not yet liquidated, nor his lawsuits settled; the latter even more urgently required his presence at home, as he had cause, he thought, to be dissatisfied with Hanson, his man of business. Yet the vacillation of his character, and the ensnaring spells with which society fettered him, contributed their part, spite of all his plans, to bind him to London, which during these years he left only for short excursions to Cambridge and Cheltenham, and the country-seats of some of his friends.

Though unable to travel in reality, he did so at least in spirit, and in the few hours of inspiration which society with the great world left him for intercourse with the Muses, his fancy transported him to the Morea and Turkey, and to these hours we owe the brilliant series of his Poetical Tales. His first poetical creations, however, subsequent to 'Childe Harold,' cannot be ranged under this description: namely, his Prologue on the re-opening of Drury Lane Theatre, and his Satire on the

[1] The following was the title of the catalogue: 'A Catalogue of Books the property of a Nobleman about to leave England on a tour to the Morea, &c., which will be sold by auction by R. H. Evans at his house, No. 26, Pall Mall, on Thursday, July 8.' Possibly the announced tour was (partially at least) only a pretext, to conceal the true motive which rendered the sale of the books necessary—namely, his pecuniary difficulties.

'Waltz.' Unimportant as the former may now appear, it was in its day almost a literary and social event. Drury Lane Theatre, opened in the year 1747 under Garrick's management with a celebrated prologue by Dr. Johnson, having been destroyed by fire in the year 1811, the Directors adopted the course, till then unknown, of announcing, that the composition of an address for the inauguration of the rebuilt theatre was open to public competition. In answer to this advertisement, forty-three poems, exhibiting much variety in their treatment, were sent in; not one of which, however, was considered worthy of adoption; so that the Committee, rejecting them one and all, applied through Lord Holland to Byron, who with considerable reluctance accepted the task, and, as his letters to that nobleman show, untiringly persevered in it, seeking his advice in every alteration. This address, although it at once received its due meed of praise, is at the present day quite forgotten, while the parodies of the two brothers James and Horace Smith, published under the title of 'Rejected Addresses,' in which they imitated with surpassing ability the style of the celebrated poets of the time, Scott, Byron, Crabbe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, &c.,[1] have maintained their place to this hour as masterpieces in their kind.

[1] The 'Rejected Addresses' 'were offered to Mr. Murray for 20*l.*, who declined to purchase, and it was with some difficulty that a publisher was found. Seven years afterwards, when the little volume had gone through seventeen editions, Mr. Murray bought the copyright for 131*l.* The twenty-fifth edition appeared in 1855. The addresses which were actually rejected were published November 11, 1812, with the title: 'The Genuine Rejected Addresses, presented to the Committee of Management for Drury Lane Theatre; preceded by that written by Lord Byron and adopted by the Committee. London. B. Macmillan.' A good joke is told of Sheridan in connection with this competition: 'At a dinner party at Rogers's, describing the poem which Mr. Whitbread had written, and sent in, among the other addresses for the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, and

The Satire called 'the Waltz,' in which he poured out his bitterness on the immorality of society, found, as compared with the Prologue, so little sympathy, that he considered it advisable to deny the authorship in a letter addressed to Murray, but intended for publication. He wrote it in the autumn of 1812 at Cheltenham, and published it in the following spring, under the pseudonym 'Horace Hornem.' Byron in this Satire stands forth as the 'laudator temporis acti;' he praises the graceful old English national dances, and beholds in the waltz, introduced from Germany, the culmination of the corruption of modern fashion. It may have been very true, that society in London, Cheltenham, or elsewhere, excelling neither in morality nor in dancing, waltzed ungracefully, and perverted that special dance by making it a manifestation of its own innate dissoluteness; but the question will arise, whether Byron would have felt this fine moral indignation had he not been excluded, by his unhappy lameness —which throughout his life was the main source of his bitterness—from taking part in the amusement.

The 'Giaour,' which Byron himself entitles as a 'Fragment of a Turkish tale,' opened the series of Poetic Tales in May 1813. 'It is no wonder,' he remarks in his journal, 'that I wrote a fragment; my mind is a fragment.'[1] The fragmentary character of this poem had also been suggested by the 'Columbus' of Rogers, which at that time enjoyed high favour; whence he took occasion to dedicate the poem to this poet, who was so highly esteemed by him. All his minor tales, however, with

which, like the rest, turned chiefly on allusions to the Phœnix, Sheridan said—"but Whitbread made more of the bird than any of them: he entered into particulars, and described its wings, beak, tail, &c.; in short, it was a *poulterer's* description of a phœnix."'—Moore's *Life*, ii. 190 (note).

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 290.

the exception of 'Mazeppa' and the 'Island,' are almost as fragmentary, and as compositions cannot be compared to those of Scott. The metrical form Byron borrowed from Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' who again was indebted for it to the 'Christabel' of Coleridge, which was at that time known only in manuscript, and was first published in the year 1816. Of the personal experiences of the poet, on which the 'Giaour' is based, we have already spoken. The approbation with which it was received was so extraordinary, that in the autumn of 1818 a fifth edition was demanded; but the charms of the poem depend chiefly on its 'poetic pearls' which Byron introduced during the printing of the different successive editions, so that the 400 lines of which it originally consisted gradually grew to about 1,500. Even the celebrated passage beginning with

> He who hath bent him o'er the dead,
> Ere the first day of death has fled,

is one of those insertions. This process plainly reveals not only the lyrical character of these narratives, but of the genius of Byron himself, as contrasted with the more epic character of that of Scott.

The habit of adding beauties we meet with, although not to the same extent, in the next tale, which appeared December 2 of the same year—the 'Bride of Abydos,' dedicated to Lord Holland. The opening lines of this poem, suggested by the 'Kennst du das Land' of Goethe, was an addition made as the volume was going through the press. This poem (the original title of which was 'Zuleika'), was written in four nights; and Byron more than once says, that by this occupation of his mind he wished to divert his thoughts from a passion, of which we have no further account, thus illustrating his own saying:

'all convulsions end with me in rhyme.'[1] Notwithstanding the rapidity of composition, the poem is more finished than the 'Giaour.' Byron was quite uncertain whether the 'Bride' would please, and was prepared for little or indeed for no success.[2] Murray's offer of 1,000 guineas for the two tales, the 'Giaour' and the 'Bride of Abydos,' he declined, therefore, provisionally until their success should be tested.[3] The result exceeded all expectation; within a month 6,000 copies of the 'Bride' were sold, and from this period also Byron's poems began to attain celebrity abroad, especially in Germany. The applause he received doubtless contributed not a little to Byron's writing a third tale, the 'Corsair,' which he finished in ten days and sent to Dallas on New Year's Day 1814. To the original cast of the dedication to Moore, Murray, on the ground of its political allusions, raised some objections; so that Byron composed a second to be chosen if approved: according to Moore's wish, however, the first was retained. On the very day of publication 13,000 copies were sold. Public opinion very soon began to assume, that Byron delineated in this poem his own experiences; that the 'Corsair' was himself; that the likeness was unmistakable; that during his pilgrimage, after Hobhouse left him, he had incognito done Heaven knows what,—why might he not have been a corsair? Appended to the 'Corsair' were two stanzas, addressed to the Princess of Wales ('Lines to a Lady Weeping') which in spite of their insignificance made a great sensation, on account of their attack on the Prince Regent—whose levée he had wished not very long before to attend—and which brought down on him unbounded censure from the Tory press. Among

[1] Compare Byron's *Diary*, December 5, 1813; Moore's *Life*, ii. 290.
[2] See Byron's *Diary*, December 5, 1813; Moore's *Life*, ii. 290.
[3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 314.

the accusations which were heaped on him, he was charged with receiving enormous sums for his writings. Through Murray, and by a letter which Dallas of his own accord addressed to the 'Morning Post,' this accusation was speedily reduced to its proper measure. Dallas, indeed best knew with whom the *honorarium* arising from Byron's works remained. The labour of correction which he had performed on 'Childe Harold,' was transferred, with reference to the Poetical Tales, to William Gifford, whom in so many words Byron described as his editor. He gave this critic even *carte blanche* to correct the style of the 'Siege of Corinth' according to his mind. In spite of his antagonistic political principles, and his occasional bitterness, Byron always spoke of Gifford with respect; personally they appear never to have met.

In the dedication of the 'Corsair' Byron again announced that with this poem his poetical career was to terminate; that, for some years at least, he would not trespass on the patience of the public. But next day this resolution was broken; the unexpected news of Napoleon's abdication at Fontainebleau furnished the occasion for a bitter ode on his 'Pagod,' which he published anonymously. He defended his inconsistency against Moore's raillery by pleading, that in this case it was impossible for him to be silent, and that by a mental reservation he had excluded anonymous authorship from the pact.[1] To Murray he wrote: 'No matter; they can but throw the old story of inconsistency in my teeth—let them—I mean, as to not publishing. However, *now* I will keep my word. Nothing but the occasion, which was *physically* irresistible, made me swerve.'[2] As if this protestation were not enough, he went a step further, he came to the unheard-of determina-

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 65. [2] *Ibid.* 67.

tion of suppressing all his writings. He actually forwarded, April 29, 1814, to Murray the requisite draft to repurchase all rights of publication and all copies in stock; the sale of his poems was to cease, and every copy of them, except two for Murray's 'own private possession,' was to be destroyed.[1] The smallest consideration might have convinced Byron, that even by such an unexampled proceeding his writings could never be destroyed. The many thousand copies which had been sold rendered destruction impossible, and further demands, as Byron must have well known, would be supplied by impressions published on the Continent, in America or elsewhere. When Mr. Murray, however, represented the extraordinary embarrassment and injury to which such a design, if carried out, would expose him, he readily consented to withdraw it. Even the silence which, as he had publicly announced, he meant to keep, his vacillating character could not maintain. On the contrary he began 'Lara' in May—which may be regarded as the continuation of the 'Corsair'—and finished it June 24, 1814. This poem, written, like the 'Corsair,' in the heroic couplet, appeared without a dedication—a departure from his usual custom—and in the same volume with Rogers's graceful tale of 'Jacqueline.' Byron had proposed, that Moore should form a third in the brotherhood, but this 'dangerous honour' he declined. The somewhat unnatural marriage between 'Larry and Jacquy,' as Byron jestingly called the two tales, was divorced in the same year. Here also in the delineation of Lara the poet partially portrayed himself.[2] In answer to the charge of Jeffrey and other critics, that the character of Lara was too elaborately

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 73.

[2] Compare the descriptions. Cant. 2, 17, 18.

drawn, Byron asks, 'What do the reviewers mean by "elaborate"? Lara I wrote while undressing, after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814.'[1]

The two following tales, 'The Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina,' were written in the year 1815, and published in the beginning of 1816. The former is distinguished by the loose and irregular, the latter, on the contrary, by the careful and musical, structure of its verse. With 'Parisina' Byron took his leave of the soil of Greece. For the copyright of the two poems Murray offered, unasked, the sum of 1,000 guineas;[2] the draft for this sum Byron, however, although in considerable straits, sent back torn through; the sum, he said, was far too much, and he wished that Murray would not throw temptation in his way. But when it was suggested to Byron,[3] how with this large *honorarium* he might aid some meritorious but needy literary men (Godwin, Maturin, Coleridge), he most readily adopted the suggestion, and professed his readiness to accept payment from Mr. Murray. The latter, however, knowing the poet's straitened circumstances, now demurred, and retained the money for Byron's own use.[4]

In order to complete our connected review of the Poetical Tales, we anticipate the order of time, and mention here the two last, which conclude the series, 'Mazeppa,' written in the autumn of 1818 at Ravenna, and 'The Island,' at Genoa at the beginning of 1823. In 'Mazeppa' we have the reflex of Byron's relation to the Countess Guiccioli; like her the object of Mazeppa's love is called Theresa, and the old Polish Count is evidently the old Count Guiccioli. In 'The Island,' the poet's predilection

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 339, 341.
[2] *Ibid.* 223.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 221.
[4] *Ibid.* 224.

for nautical adventures is again manifest, and the poem is remarkable, as showing how enthusiasm for the state of nature, after the fashion of Rousseau, seizes and engages his fancy; it also recalls, in many respects, the gorgeous colouring of Wilson's 'Isle of Palms' (1812). Of all the Tales of Byron, 'The Island' is the only one which can claim artistic repose and harmonious finish. It is not like the others an outburst of passion, neither is it a dark picture of nocturnal horrors, nor a musical dissonance reduced to harmony. 'Mazeppa' also is more calm and composed than its predecessors, but it resembles a moon-lit landscape, while 'The Island' is like a scene illumined with the bright rays of the sun. Although these did not excite nearly the same interest as the earlier Tales, they are a brilliant refutation of a notion which Byron expressed to Moore: 'I know not,' he says, in a letter written in 1816 to Moore,[1] 'why I have dwelt so much on the same scenes, except that I find them fading, or confusing, (if such a word may be) in my memory, in the midst of present turbulence and pressure, and I felt anxious to stamp before the die was worn out. I now break it. With those countries, and events connected with them, all my really poetical feelings begin and end. Were I to try, I could make nothing of any other subject; and that I have apparently exhausted.' The groundlessness of his apprehension that he had written himself out is sufficiently transparent, though it is certainly true, that Greece had the same relation to Byron's romantic tales that Scotland had to those of Scott and to the Waverley romances: Greece was the soil that gave them birth. The wild and lawless war of passions on the sacred soil of classical beauty, her ardent longing after this departed

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 206.

beauty, her conscious impotence to call it into life again, the self-reproaches which this consciousness engendered,—these were the features in modern Greece, which most corresponded to the state of the poet's own mind, and references to himself are everywhere to be read between the lines; he would identify himself not only with the heroes of modern Greece, but with Greece itself.

The hero of the tales is himself; the portrait he draws is his own, painted in the darkest possible colours—it is evermore Childe Harold, or, to speak more correctly, Childe Burun; his hero is constantly tortured by secret guilt and by the recollection of deeds of darkness, driven and goaded by untamable passions; he despises the world and men, and is at enmity with them and with himself. The continued treatment of the same, so little varied, theme, the constant production of the same scenery, would, in any hand less powerful and impassioned than Byron's, have degenerated into monotony. But next to the novelty and originality of these tales, it was their matchless force and vigour which magnetically attracted the reading world. Society demanded strong excitement and highly seasoned food. None of his later works therefore met with such undivided applause as 'Childe Harold' and the Greek Tales. So far he stood, during this period, at the summit of his glory, and left all his competitors far behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE.

1815–1816.

BEFORE we follow Byron to the marriage ceremony, it will be needful to form some notion of the state of his feelings at that period, as well as of his previous relations to women. Some insight into his mental condition we obtain from the journal, which he kept from November 14, 1813, to April 10, 1814, and sent to Moore on July 14 of the latter year.[1] From this diary, as from compositions of this class generally, no conclusions should be drawn pretending to exclude contradiction: the diary rather reflects the impressions and feelings of the moment, as fleeting as they are often contradictory: and of this Byron is himself quite conscious. 'This journal,' he says, 'is a relief. When I am tired, as I generally am, out comes this and down goes everything. But I can't read it over; and God knows what contradictions it may contain. If I am sincere with myself (but I fear one lies more to one's self than to anyone else), every page should confute, refute, and utterly abjure its predecessor.'[2] There are, however, views and feelings which perpetually recur from the first to the last page, and which run through it, not so much like a red as rather like a grey thread. Hamlet's reflections—

> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!

[1] It is given in Moore's *Life*, ii. 252–311; iii. 1–24.

[2] Moore's *Life*, ii. 294.

> Fye on't! O fye! 'tis an unweeded garden
> That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely—[1]

form its principal text. Throughout it we meet with expressions (called forth mainly by the corruptions of society) of indifference and callousness, of vacuity and satiety, of loathing and contempt for men. Never do we hear a fresh or joyous tone, never does a youthful hope beam forth. The journal opens with these words: 'At five-and-twenty, when the better part of life is over (!) one should be *something*; and what am I? Nothing but five-and-twenty and the odd months. What have I seen? The same man all over the world—ay, and woman too.'[2] It concludes thus: "I will keep no further journal of that same hesternal torch-light: and to prevent me from returning, like a dog, to the vomit of memory, I tear out the remaining leaves of this volume and write, in *Ipecacuanha*, "that the Bourbons are restored!!!" "Hang up Philosophy." To be sure I have long despised myself and man, but I have never spat in the face of my species before. O fool, I shall go mad!'[3] This for a man of five-and-twenty is a tone as unusual as it is unnatural. The only prospect which consoles him amid this misery is the prospect of a dreamless sleep: 'I see no such horror,' he says, 'in a "dreamless sleep," and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not render tiresome. Time must decide; and eternity won't be the less agreeable or more horrible because one did not expect it. In the meantime, I am grateful for some good, and tolerably patient under certain evils—grâce à Dieu et mon bon tempérament.'[4] He goes so far as to declare, that he is too lazy to shoot himself—especially as it would annoy Augusta.[5] Such were the feelings of Byron, in the

[1] Act i. sc. 2.
[2] Moore's *Life*, ii. 253.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 24.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 282.
[5] *Ibid.* 298.

heyday of his youth, and while he enjoyed a position in life of pre-eminent advantages and the fame of a poet recognised by the world! Various causes, which from his birth co-operated in bringing him to this unhappy frame of mind, have been brought to light in the course of our narrative; one only remains to be more minutely considered—his relation to women.

That Byron inherited a nature endued with strong sensual passion is undeniable: 'My blood,' he said once, 'is all meridian;'[1] and the precocious gratification of this tendency had never been restrained, either by himself or by others. If we may believe a poem of the year 1807 (first published after his death), he had even then a son;[2] though, notwithstanding the semblance of truth and reality in these verses, and a supposed allusion in 'Don Juan,'[3] no mention is ever made of the existence of such relationship. We have already spoken of the mistress who, disguised as a page, accompanied him when a student. At Newstead, according to what his enemies said, and he himself gives us to understand in 'Childe Harold,' he kept a regular harem; though, in truth, it appears that this harem consisted only of a single Odalisque, one of the house-maids.[4] During his pilgrimage,

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 157.

[2] 'To my Son.' *Works*, vii. 209.

[3] Canto xvi. 61.

[4] [Let Moore's remarks on these irregularities be read in connection with the above. '—the notion caught up by many, from his own allusions in "Childe Harold," to irregularities and orgies of which Newstead had been the scene, is, like most other imputations against him founded on his own testimony, greatly exaggerated. He describes, it is well known, the home of his poetical representative as "a monastic dome, condemned to uses vile," and then adds,—

"Where Superstition once had made her den,
Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile."

'Mr. Dallas, too, giving in to the same strain of exaggeration, says, in speaking of the poet's preparation for his departure, "already satiated

too, his love affairs scarcely exceeded the usual measure. After his return, however, when his travels and adventures, partly true, partly fabulous, and his sudden fame as a poet made him doubly charming, 'dear Childe Harold' was positively besieged by women. One mother wrote to offer him her daughter for a hundred pounds; and when the girl herself sent a written refusal, Byron settled the matter by a present of money. Another lady disguised as a page handed him her own love-letter: a third he answered by a refusal, and so on. There is another anecdote, of his meeting shortly after his marriage, in his wife's drawing room, three married ladies, with whom he had been too intimate. 'There are,' as he remarked to Medwin,[1] 'few Josephs in the world, but many Potiphar's wives.' He was, in fact, properly the seduced, and could say at a later period of his life with good conscience and not without pride, that, although by no means a Joseph, he had yet never seduced a woman.[2] He had been, as he another time asserts, all his life a martyr to women.[3] Women have in truth no right to complain of Byron; he described them, as they showed themselves to him, and from his childhood he at least had seen them on their least favourable, not to say their worst side. At the same time it is not to be denied,

with pleasure and disgusted with those companions who have no other resource, he had resolved on mastering his appetites;—he broke up his harems." The truth, however, is, that the narrowness of Lord Byron's means would alone have prevented such oriental luxuries. The mode of his life at Newstead was simple and unexpensive . . . and with respect to the alleged "harems," it appears certain, that one or two suspected "subintroductæ" (as the ancient monks of the Abbey would have styled them), and those, too, among the ordinary menials of the establishment, were all that even scandal itself could ever fix upon to warrant such an assumption.'—Moore's *Life*, i. 261, 262.]

[1] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 92; *Dallas*, iii. 23, 40.

[2] Medwin, p. 92; Dallas, iii. p. 91. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 99, 101.

that he on his part tried and plagued them to the utmost of his power.

Frequent mention has been made of Byron's intimacy with Lady Caroline Lamb; which, since it exercised a considerable influence on his life, and gives at the same time a vivid picture of the state of society, requires to be mentioned at greater length. Lady Caroline Lamb (1785–1828) was the only daughter of the third Lord Besborough and of Lady Henrietta Frances Spencer, daughter of the first Earl Spencer. She is described by a biographer as 'wild, impatient of restraint, rapid in her impulses, generous and kind of heart,'[1]—therefore in every respect of a kindred spirit with Byron, who was three years her junior. In person she was 'small, slight, and in earlier life perfectly formed; but her countenance had no other beauty than expression—that charm it possessed to a singular degree; her eyes were dark, but her hair and complexion fair; her manners, though somewhat eccentric and apparently, not really, affected, had a fascination which it is difficult to conceive.'[2] Lady Morgan[3] describes her voice as 'soft, low, and caressing.' Her conduct was 'one perpetual kaleidoscope of changes.'[4] In 1805 she was married to William Lamb, afterwards the celebrated statesman, Lord Melbourne, to whom she bore three children. Her burning desire to become acquainted with the author of 'Childe Harold' was first gratified at a party (March 1812),[5] and her impressions were thus re-

[1] *Annual Biography* for the year 1829; xiii. 51.

[2] *Ut supra*, p. 55. [3] *Memoirs*, 2nd edit. ii. 254. London, 1863.

[4] *Annual Biography*, p. 56.

[5] According to Galt (p. 187), it was she who introduced herself as a page to Byron. Lady Morgan's *Memoirs*, ii. 198–214, 2nd edit. London, 1863, are the principal sources of information on Byron's connection with Lady Caroline Lamb. Compare also *Annual Biography*, 1829, xiii. 51–57.

corded in her journal: 'mad—bad—and dangerous to know.'[1] Byron shortly afterwards paid her a visit; what then took place she has herself described. 'Rogers and Moore were standing by me: I was on the sofa. I had just come in from riding. I was filthy and heated. When Lord Byron was announced, I flew out of the room to wash myself. When I returned Rogers said, "Lord Byron, you are a happy man. Lady Caroline has been sitting here in all her dirt with us, but when you were announced, she flew to beautify herself!"'[2]—a significant beginning. For the next nine months Byron almost lived in Melbourne House, 'then the centre of all gaiety, at least in appearance.' Byron was a recognised worshipper: Mr. William Lamb, though aware of the intimacy, concerned himself little about the morals of his wife: he laughed at it, she says,[3] 'and his indolence made him insensible to everything.' The scandal, however, was too great, and Lady Caroline's mother did not rest until she had removed her daughter, for some time at least, to her own father's house in Ireland. Mr. Lamb forgave his wife all and implored her to remain—but in vain. To 'his dearest Caroline,' who had left him 'from a feeling of duty' to her husband and her mother,' Byron wrote a glowing farewell letter, of which it will be enough to quote the end of the postscript. 'Is there anything in earth or heaven that would have made me so happy as to have made you mine long ago? and not less now than then, but more than ever at this time. You know I would with pleasure give up all here and beyond the grave for you, and in refraining from this, must my motives be misunderstood? I

[1] Lady Morgan's *Memoirs*, ii. 200.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 201.
[3] *Ut supra*, p. 199.
'When men begin to speak of duty'—it is said in *Glenarvon*—'they 'ceased to love.'—*Memoirs*, i. 103.

care not who knows this, or what use is made of it.'[1] After Lady Caroline's return, the fiery glow and ardour of the intimacy, at least on Byron's side, had somewhat cooled down, and it gradually took a turn which necessarily led to mutual hatred. Lady Caroline, neglected and wronged, as she thought, by Byron, who appears to have taken leave of her in an offensive letter, feigned an attempt at suicide at a ball at Lady Heathcoate's, slightly wounding herself with a knife.[2] The utter alienation of her lover, who had already become cold, was the only and the natural result: such immoderate passion had already estranged him from his mother. When all else was vain, Lady Caroline gave vent to her mortification and revenge by her pen: she wrote a romance called 'Glenarvon' which made a noise at the time, in which she portrayed Byron in the darkest colours. She describes him as a demon full of deceit and wickedness; as a rattlesnake, and herself as the bird under the spell of his fascination. The narrative of the way in which he is said to have conquered and tortured her heart is full of the wildest confusion. On the title-page she placed as a motto the concluding verses of the 'Corsair'—

> He left a name to all succeeding times
> Linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes.[3]

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[1] Lord Byron's parting letter to Lady Caroline Lamb. Lady Morgan's *Memoirs*, ii. 204.

[2] Guiccioli's *Byron*, i. 101, English translation; *Glenarvon* (3rd edit.) iii. 82 *et seq.* The letter, if genuine, is given in *Glenarvon*, iii. 79–80.

[3] The fourth edition has not these lines, but the motto from Tacitus: 'contemptu famae contemni virtutem.' The title-pages of the three volumes, of which the novel consists, are characteristic. On the vignette of the first volume, a disconsolate Cupid is looking at a winged heart which has flown from a nest, with the subscription: 'L'on t'a trop chéri.' On that of the second volume, Cupid points to a butterfly, which is flying into a flame rising from an altar; underneath is written: 'Mon plaisir me coûte la vie.' On the third, three weeping Cupids sur-

'Glenarvon' appeared anonymously at a time very painful and prejudicial to Byron, immediately after his wife had separated from him. When the book was lent to him, while he was in Switzerland, by Madame de Staël, he wrote to Moore:[1] 'By the way, I suppose you have seen "Glenarvon." Madame de Staël lent it me to read from Coppet last autumn. It seems to me that if the authoress had written the *truth*, and nothing but the truth—the whole truth—the romance would not only have been more *romantic*, but more entertaining. As for the likeness, the picture can't be good. I did not sit long enough.'[2] He told Medwin, that there was nothing of his in the book but a portion of a letter,[3] probably the letter in which he renounced her. In her literary pursuits[4] Lady Caroline did not find the repose she needed; on the contrary she afterwards became subject to fits of such severity and long continuance, that her physicians imputed them to partial insanity, and a separation, in consequence, took place between her and her husband.[5]

Thus had Byron gradually lost all reverence for women or confidence in them: he was satiated by excesses, and the moral basis was utterly wanting in all his relations

round an urn, on which is inscribed the name Calantha: and underneath is: 'Il n'est plus temps.'

[1] Moore's *Life and Letters*, iii. 314.

[2] During Byron's residence at Venice, an Italian translation of *Glenarvon* was announced for publication, and being asked by the Censor, whether he had any objection to its appearance, he answered No, and even gave the translator a contribution to defray the expenses of publication. He thus took the sting from the book, whilst active opposition on his part would have operated against him. Besides, he loved celebrity at any price. He at the same time mortified the authoress, to whose knowledge he caused the share he had in its publication to be made known. Moore's *Life*, iii. 51. See also *Marquis de Salvo*, p. 74 *et seq.*

[3] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 344.

[4] Besides *Glenarvon* she wrote the romances of *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis.*

[5] *Biography*, xiii. 54.

with them. What beneficial influence the society, which he never enjoyed, of truly noble women might have had, may be inferred from some expressions which interrupt his habitual strain of contempt for women. 'There is something to me,' he says, 'very softening in the presence of a woman—I always feel in better humour with myself and everything else, if there is a woman within ken.'[1] True goodness of heart in women never failed to produce its effect upon him: even to an old, ugly, ill-tempered woman, who by his friends was dreaded as a spectre and a scarecrow, he showed the greatest patience and forbearance 'because the poor old devil was kind' to him.[2] These were, however, the exceptions; the conviction of his unfortunate peculiarity, that he could be happy neither with women nor without them, grew stronger within him. He had, in fact, far too many feminine elements in his own character to admit of his living happily with the sex. He at last approximated to his friends, the Turks, in his views of the character and position of women. 'I regard them,' he says, 'as very pretty but inferior creatures, who are as little in their place at our tables (he disliked, it is well known, to see women eat) as they would be in our council chambers. The whole of the present system with regard to the female sex is a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalry of our forefathers. I look on them as grown-up children, but, like a foolish mamma, I am constantly the slave of one of them. In spite of my contempt for the sex I am ever against my will devoted to some one individual woman. The Turks shut up their women and are much happier; give a woman a looking-glass and burnt almonds, and she will be content.'[3]

And yet in spite of all this he had serious thoughts of

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 7.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 8 (note).
[3] Dallas, iii. 192; compare his Journal, Moore's *Life*, v. 60.

marrying. A wife, he thinks, would be his salvation,[1] and he should like to have some one with whom he might yawn. He regards marriage as an inevitable destiny, but it is evident that a marriage of affection was with him out of the question. Worldly motives determined him—the imperative necessity of improving his affairs and attaining a position in harmony with his rank. These ends promised to be compassed by a marriage with Miss Milbanke. Anna Isabella (Annabella, contracted Bella) Milbanke (born May 17, 1792, died May 16, 1860) was the only child of Sir Ralph Milbanke—a wealthy baronet of the county of Durham [2]—and of his wife Judith Noel, eldest daughter of Viscount Wentworth. Byron saw her for the first time at a party, when she was on a visit to her aunt, Lady Melbourne, in London. She was sitting alone on the sofa, and attracted his attention by the simplicity of her dress, so that he took her for a 'humble companion' of the family, and asked Moore if he were right in his conjecture, who whispered in his ear that she was quite the reverse—a rich heiress, and that he would do well to marry her and restore again his old place, Newstead.[3] Miss Milbanke's appearance, according to Byron's own statement, contrasted favourably with the artificial stiffness of fashion; she was simple and modest, had a good figure and was pretty. Her features, though not regular, were delicate and feminine, and her complexion of the purest blonde.[4] Byron was interested and attracted, and an acquaintance with her began, which was encouraged by his friends Lady Melbourne and Lady Jersey. After her return to her home in the

[1] Journal, Moore's *Life*, ii. 310.

[2] Besides his seat at Seaham near Stockton-on-Tees, Sir Ralph possessed Halnaby near Darlington.

[3] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 44.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 44, 45.

North, he corresponded with her for a considerable time, and at length, following the advice of Lady Melbourne, proposed for her (1812), but was refused. The refusal was, however, softened by the most sincere assurances of respect and friendship, and even the wish was expressed, that he would continue his correspondence with her, which accordingly was done. 'What an odd situation and friendship is ours!'—he writes in his Diary Nov. 30, 1813,—'without one spark of love on either side, and produced by circumstances which, in general, lead to coldness on one side, and aversion on the other. She is a very superior woman, and very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress—a girl of twenty—a peeress that is to be in her own right, an only child, and a *savante*, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess [1]—a mathematician [2]—a metaphysician, and yet, withal, very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension. Any other head would be turned with half her acquisitions and a tenth of her advantages.' [3] Judgments equally favourable of Miss Milbanke Byron often expressed, although in them he contradicted himself, as when on another occasion he declares, 'I hate "esprit" in petticoats.' Under the date March 14, 1814, there is an entry in his Journal: 'A letter from Bella, which I answered. I shall be in love with her again, if I don't take care:' and this caution he did not observe. After paying his addresses,

[1] She patronised a poor versemaker, Joseph Blackett (1786-1810), who lived and died at Seaham. Blackett was the son of an artisan, and, like Hans Sachs, a shoemaker and a poet. Byron lashed him in the *English Bards, &c.* and repeatedly laughed at his patroness, before he was acquainted with her. Dallas also was a patron of Blackett. Compare Epitaph for Joseph Blackett, *Life and Works*, ix. 1. Blackett's *Remains*, with a Life, edited by Pratt, appeared in two volumes, 1811.

[2] Byron at a later period expressed himself with special vehemence against the mathematical studies of ladies. See *Beppo*, 78. Miss Milbanke had received instruction in Greek from Dr. Parr.

[3] Journal, Moore's *Life*, ii. 285.

not without serious thoughts of marriage, to two or three other ladies, he renewed (September 1814) his suit, and was accepted. He was then living at Newstead; and a friend—perhaps his sister?—speaking to him of his cheerless and unsettled state both of mind and body, earnestly advised him to marry. After much discussion he consented, and named Miss Milbanke as his choice. To this, however, it was strongly objected by his adviser, that Miss Milbanke had at present no fortune, and that without fortune he could not marry; that she was, moreover, a learned lady, and that learning in a woman would not at all suit him. A counter-proposal was made by this friend, and after some deliberation a proposal of marriage, written at Byron's request by this person, was actually despatched to the lady proposed. After some days an answer, containing a refusal, arrived as they were one morning sitting together. '"You see," said Lord Byron, "that, after all, Miss Milbanke is to be the person; I will write to her." He accordingly wrote on the moment, and, as soon as he had finished, his friend, still remonstrating strongly against his choice, took up and read the letter, but on perusing it observed, "Well; really this is a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go. I never read a prettier one." "Then it *shall* go," said Lord, Byron: and in so saying sealed and sent off, on the instant, this fiat of his fate.'[1]

The favourable answer which he received was perhaps the more flattering to Byron's pride and vanity from the very fact, that his final acceptance had been preceded by a refusal.[2] He had come forth to a certain extent as a victor

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 113, 114.

[2] To a person so inclined to superstition as Byron it might appear significant, that, at the very moment when Miss Milbanke's letter accepting him arrived, his gardener brought to him the marriage-ring of his mother, which she had lost many years before in the garden. 'If Miss

from the conflict, and his triumph appeared the greater as he had learnt, that Miss Milbanke had in the interval rejected half-a-dozen suitors. He, whose reputation was so questionable, and who loved to paint himself in such dark colours, had gained the hand of a very pattern of virtue. He was now in comparatively high spirits, and his future prospects appeared to him in the most rose-coloured light. He calls her 'the paragon of only children' invested with 'golden opinions of all sorts of men,'[1] and perfection itself.[2] His mocking humour and cynicism were not, indeed, altogether to be suppressed: 'I am very much in love'—he writes to a lady with whom he was intimate—'and as silly as all single gentlemen must be in that sentimental condition.'[3] The congratulations of relatives bored him. He was told that it was not the fashion to be married in a black, but in a blue coat, and he hates a blue one.[4] He wished nothing more ardently than that the fatal day were well over, and in his letters to his friends he speaks of his approaching marriage in a tone of mockery and levity. A long betrothal being contrary to English custom, preparations for marriage were forthwith made. His own affairs, indeed, were at this time so embarrassed, that Byron was almost induced to postpone the marriage. An effort to arrange them brought him from Newstead to London, whence he proceeded towards the end of December, accompanied by Hobhouse, to Seaham, and was there married, January 2, 1815.[5]

Milbanke accepts me,' he cried, opening her letter, 'this ring shall also be my marriage-ring.' He afterwards saw that he might have chosen a ring promising more happiness.

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 116.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 120. 'My wife elect is perfection.'

[3] *Ibid.* iii. 117.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 118.

[5] [Subjoined is a certified copy 'of the entry No. 7 in the Register of Marriages for the year 1815 kept in the parish of Seaham' in the County of Durham.

'George Gordon Byron Lord Byron of Rochdale and Anne Isabella

According to Leigh Hunt's account, Byron before going to the church,[1] and while waiting for his bride, occupied himself in reading some portions of Sandys' translation of 'Ovid.' His feelings during the marriage ceremony he has himself described in 'the Dream,' although it is difficult to decide how much is to be attributed to the subsequent workings of his fancy. 'Lady Byron'—so he told Medwin—'was of all present the only unconcerned person. Lady Noel, her mother, wept, and I trembled like a leaf and made the wrong responses.'[2] After the marriage ceremony he is said to have been guilty of strange offences against propriety. Thus when they drove up to Halnaby, where the honeymoon was to be spent, he sprang out of the carriage and went away without concerning himself about his bride, who was handed out by the butler.[3]

Milbanke of this Parish were married in Seaham House by Special Licence with consent of Parents, this Second Day of January in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifteen.

'By me Thos. Noel
Rector of Kirkby Mallory Leicestershire.

'This marriage was solemnized between us { Byron / Anne Isabella Milbanke.

'In the presence of { John Cam. Hobhouse of Chantry House, Wilts / Richd. Wallis, Vicar of Seaham.']

[1] [Mr. Leigh Hunt may or may not be correct in his account of Lord Byron's studies, while waiting for his bride, but Lord Byron did not go to church to be married. See the above note.]

[2] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 46.

[3] Harriet Martineau's *Biographical Sketches*. London, 1869, p. 318. Miss Martineau and Mrs. Stowe agree in representing the conduct of Byron to his young wife immediately after the wedding as revolting, and in asserting that he used the most unworthy expressions to her; that he had married her, he said, merely from revenge. Compare Miss Martineau's Sketch, pp. 316–325. According to Mrs. Stowe he said to her, 'You might have saved me from this, madam! you had all in your own power when I offered myself to you first; then you might have made me what you pleased; but now you will find that you have married a devil.' Directly opposed to this is the testimony of Mrs. Minns, for many years the trusted maid-servant of Lady Byron, who declares that she was present at the marriage ceremony; that she does not believe that Mrs. Beecher Stowe

When starting for that place he addressed his young wife as 'Miss Milbanke,' a mistake which the lady's confidential attendant pronounced to be a bad omen.[1] Byron, on his side, repeatedly complained, that this abigail had been packed in between himself and his wife, instead of their being left to themselves.[2] We have the utmost difficulty in conceiving Byron acting the part of bridegroom. His old shyness would again display itself, and to the household arrangements of his wife's parents he must have accommodated himself as fire would with water. Sir Ralph was a formal, good-natured, probably narrow-minded country gentleman surrounded by a corresponding circle of persons and things, in which the satirical Byron moved, as the German proverb has it, like a pike in a tank of gold fish. From different hints it may be gathered, that Sir Ralph himself and the whole family lived under the severe rule of Lady Milbanke. Thus though the honeymoon of the young couple—Byron called it in mockery the treacle-moon[3]—was not altogether free from clouds,

had her story from Lady Byron; that she saw the bride alight from the carriage 'buoyant and happy, as a bride should be;' and that she knows nothing of the charge brought against Byron and his sister. According to Mrs. Minns, the marriage did not take place in the church, but in the drawing-room of the house at Seaham—a statement which is verified by the above copy of the marriage-certificate. See *Quarterly Review*, October, 1869, p. 411 (note).

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 141.

[2] [This is flatly denied by Hobhouse in the article on Medwin's *Conversations* published in the *Westminster Review*, No. V., January 1825, p. 24. 'There was nobody in the carriage that conveyed Lord and Lady Byron from Seaham to Halnaby on the day of their marriage, besides his Lordship and his wife.'—In the extract from Lord Broughton's (Hobhouse's) *Private Memoirs*, printed but not published, which appeared in the April number for 1871 of the *Edinburgh Review*, p. 298, Lord Broughton says: 'I was present at the marriage of this lady with my friend, and handed her into the carriage, which took the bride and bridegroom away. Shaking hands with Lady Byron, I wished her all happiness. Her answer was, "If I am not happy it will be my own fault."']

[3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 145.

the barometer of love, according to his own assertion, never fell to zero.[1] 'I am in a state of sameness and stagnation,'— he writes to Moore —'and totally occupied in consuming the fruits—and sauntering—and playing dull games at cards—and yawning—and trying to read old Annual Registers and the daily papers—and gathering shells on the shore—and watching the growth of stunted gooseberry-bushes in the garden.'[2] A few days later he completes the picture in the following words: 'I have been very comfortable here, listening to that d—d monologue, which elderly gentlemen call conversation, and in which my pious father-in-law repeats himself every evening—save one, when he played upon the fiddle. However, they have been very kind and hospitable, and I like them and the place vastly, and I hope they will live many happy months. Bell is in health, and unvaried good-humour and behaviour. But we are all in the agonies of packing and parting; and I suppose by this time to-morrow I shall be stuck in the chariot with my chin upon a band-box. I have prepared, however, another carriage for the abigail, and all the trumpery which our wives drag along with them.'[3] Thus the young couple, about the middle of March, began their journey to London, visiting on the way Colonel and Mrs. Leigh at their house near Newmarket. In town they occupied the house of the Duchess of Devonshire, during her absence in France. They set up a brilliant establishment, kept separate equipages, gave parties[4]—in a word, threw themselves into the vortex of

[1] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 49. [2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 152.

[3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 154.

[4] [This account, resting, no doubt, on the authority of Medwin, is distinctly and positively denied by Hobhouse in the article of the *Westminster Review* already quoted, p. 25: 'Lord and Lady Byron did not give dinner parties; they had not separate carriages; they did not launch out into any extravagance.']

fashionable life. As Lady Byron was reported to be a great heiress, the creditors of Byron besieged him, demanding their money with compound interest if possible: the 10,000*l.* which she had received as a marriage dowry soon melted away.[1] In a few months after the marriage, Lady Byron's uncle, Lord Wentworth, died, whose income was estimated at seven or eight thousand a-year, but his decease brought about no improvement in Byron's affairs. Lord Wentworth had, as was expected, entailed the bulk of his property on Lady Milbanke and her daughter, with the condition, that they should assume the family name of Noel. The only immediate advantage which accrued to Byron from this Will took a form little acceptable to his taste. When his father-in-law went to Kirkby Mallory, the estate inherited from the deceased Lord, Sir Ralph offered to his son-in-law his house at Seaham as a residence; an offer which, if accepted, would have considerably diminished the expenses of housekeeping. It was even settled, that they should move thither in August, and that Lady Byron should be confined there. This plan, however, from causes unknown to us, was never carried out; happily, we must think, for Byron, in spite of the advantages he thus forfeited. The condition of Byron, as a married country gentleman at Seaham, would have been worse than that of Pegasus in the yoke: it would have been the grave of his poetry, and intellectual death for himself. At Newstead he had at least the romantic background of his own historical family estate; at Seaham this poetical charm would have been wanting. But the state of his affairs became more and more unsupportable. He was again obliged to try the expedient of selling his library. Mr. Murray, on learning this, immediately forwarded to

[1] [Denied by Hobhouse, *Ibid.* 'The whole of Lady Byron's fortune was put into settlement, and could not be melted away.']

him the sum of 1,500*l.*, assuring him that another sum of like amount would be at his service in a few weeks.[1] This liberal offer, however, was declined. Eight or nine executions had taken place in his house during the year, and even the beds on which they slept were in the possession of bailiffs. His privilege as a peer alone exempted him from imprisonment for debt. Amid these miserable circumstances Lady Byron gave birth[2] (December 10, 1815) to a daughter, Augusta Ada.[3] In compliance with the wish of her husband, communicated (January 6) to her by letter,—a wish arising, according to his own account, from the embarrassed state of his affairs,—Lady Byron left London a few weeks afterwards (January 15) on a visit to her father in Leicestershire, whither Byron, according to agreement, was to follow her. Husband and wife parted from each other in the utmost kindness, and on the road, Lady Byron wrote to her husband a letter full of affection and playfulness.[4]

She had scarcely arrived at Kirkby Mallory when her father communicated to Byron, utterly unprepared for any such resolution, that his wife would return to him no more! To this he replied, that he did not recognise his paternal authority in this matter, and that such a communication could be received only from his wife. The next post brought the confirmation written in her

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 192.

[2] [In the *Morning Chronicle* of Dec. 12, 1815, the birth was thus announced:—'Sunday last Lady Byron was safely delivered of a daughter at his Lordship's house, Piccadilly Terrace.']

[3] Byron remarked to Moore, that Ada was a very ancient name in his family, which, however, had not been used from the reign of King John. The name Augusta the child received from Byron's sister, who was also godmother.

[4] The letter began 'Dear Duck,' and was signed 'Your Pippin.' Compare Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* (2nd edit. London, 1860), p. 247 and 254, and the note to *Don Juan*, i. 32. Lockhart's Ed.

own hand. So Moore[1] and Byron himself[2] describe the event. Lady Byron, after the publication of 'Moore's Life and Letters' in the year 1830, gave a somewhat different statement, and on so important a point it is but just that we should hear her own account. 'Previously to my departure, it had been strongly impressed on my mind that Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity. This opinion was derived in a great measure from the communications made to me by his nearest relatives[3] and personal attendant, who had more opportunities than myself of observing him during the latter part of my stay in town. It was even represented to me that he was in danger of destroying himself. *With the concurrence of his family* (Lady Byron underlines these words, without, however, removing our doubts) I had consulted Dr. Baillie,[4] as a friend, (January 8) respecting this supposed malady. On acquainting him with the state of the case, and with Lord Byron's desire that I should leave London, Dr. Baillie thought that my absence might be advisable as an experiment, *assuming* the fact of mental derangement; for Dr. Baillie, not having had access to Lord Byron, could not pronounce a positive opinion on that point. He enjoined that in correspondence with Lord Byron, I should avoid all but light and soothing topics.

[1] *Life*, iii. 190.

[2] Byron's account is given not only in Medwin, but also to the same effect in the fragment of a novel which he wrote 1817. See the note to *Don Juan*, i. 32. Lockhart's Ed.

[3] Who could these nearest relatives have been? Only his sister, who about this time was staying in his house on a visit. It is nowhere said that she ever regarded her brother as insane, and Lady Byron must have, undesignedly—or designedly?—misapprehended her communications. Dallas at this period had no intercourse with Byron. There remains therefore only the 'personal attendant,' i.e. Fletcher—a very distinguished authority.

[4] Dr. Baillie had already treated Byron when a boy on account of his foot.

Under these impressions, I left London, determined to follow the advice given by Dr. Baillie. Whatever might have been the nature of Lord Byron's conduct towards me from the time of my marriage, yet, supposing him to be in a state of mental alienation, it was not for *me*, nor for any person of common humanity, to manifest at that moment a sense of injury. On the day of my departure, and again on my arrival at Kirkby, January 16, I wrote to Lord Byron in a kind and cheerful tone, according to these medical directions. The last letter was circulated and employed as a pretext for the charge of my having been subsequently *influenced* to "*desert*" my husband.[1] When I arrived at Kirkby Mallory'—continues Lady Byron—'my parents were unacquainted with the existence of any causes likely to destroy my prospects of happiness, and when I communicated to them the opinion which had been formed concerning Lord Byron's state of mind, they were most anxious to promote his restoration by every means in their power. They assured those relations who were with him in London that "they would devote their whole care and attention to the alleviation of his malady," and hoped to make the best arrangements for his comfort, if he could be induced to visit them. With these intentions, my mother wrote on the 17th to Lord Byron, inviting him to Kirkby Mallory. She had always treated him with an affectionate consideration and indulgence, which extended to every little peculiarity of his feelings. Never did an irritating word escape her lips in her whole intercourse with him. The accounts given me after I left Lord Byron by the persons in constant intercourse with him, added to those doubts which had before transiently occurred to my mind as to the reality of the alleged disease, and the

[1] At any rate she played the part committed to her very naturally.

reports of his medical attendant were far from establishing the existence of anything like lunacy. Under this uncertainty I deemed it right to communicate to my parents that if I were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce me to return to him. It therefore appeared expedient both to them and myself to consult the ablest advisers. For that object, and also to obtain still further information respecting the appearances which seemed to indicate mental derangement, my mother determined to go to London.[1] She was empowered by me to take legal opinions on a written statement of mine, though I had then reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother.'

So far Lady Byron. Lady Noel accordingly applied to Dr. Lushington, a lawyer on intimate terms of friendship with the family (Sir Samuel Romilly also was consulted), who considered a 'reconciliation as by no means impossible, and felt most sincerely a wish to aid in effecting it.'[2] Some days afterwards Lady Byron herself came to London (without seeing her husband), and communicated to Dr. Lushington those facts of the case which she had concealed from her parents. From that moment Dr. Lushington[3] changed his opinion, declared a reconciliation impossible, and added, that he could neither professionally nor in any other way take any part towards effecting it.[4] Sir Ralph

[1] It is very suggestive of the family relations, that the mother, not the father, undertook this business.

[2] Dr. Lushington is still alive, but he has hitherto thought it advisable not to break silence, although, for the interests of all concerned, it were much to be wished that before his death he would publish the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The other adviser, Sir Samuel Romilly, after the death of his wife, committed suicide, in the year 1818; which Byron regarded as a judgment. See note on *Don Juan*, i. 15.

[3] Dr. Lushington in a letter to Lady Byron, Moore's *Life*, vi. (Appendix), 279.

[4] *Ibid.*

now proposed, February 2, to Lord Byron an amicable separation; a proposal which at first Byron rejected; and only when threatened with legal measures did he agree to sign a deed of separation.[1]

So, then, Lady Byron resolved to separate from her husband, because she was convinced, that he had been guilty of a dark and mysterious crime, which she, a young woman, though she could not impart it even to her mother, was yet able to communicate to her legal adviser, he too being a young man; and which filled him with such horror that he forgot the old golden legal maxim:—

> Ein's Mannes Rede ist keine Rede,
> Man soll sie billig hören beede.
>
> The word of one man is no word:
> Justice says, let both be heard.

Lady Caroline Lamb too thought she had discovered the key to Byron's eccentric and enigmatical character in a dark deed which lay on his conscience: *her* notion was murder![2] In later years, however, Lady Byron was by no means assured on this point; at least, in exonerating her parents, she employs, in the above-mentioned remarks on 'Moore's Life and Letters,' the following words: 'If the statement on which my legal advisers (the late Sir Samuel Romilly and Dr. Lushington) formed their opinions were false, the responsibility and the odium should rest with *me only*.'[3] This scarcely admits of any other interpretation, than that she knew the facts she had stated, not from her own personal observation, but only as communicated to her through a

[1] *Lady Byron's Statement*, Moore's *Life*, vi. 279. [Let this be compared with Lord Broughton's representation of this special point: 'I shall content myself . . . . with asserting, that it was not fear on the part of Lord Byron that persuaded him to separate from his wife. On the contrary, he was quite ready to "go into court," as they call it.'—*Edinburgh Review*, April, 1871, p. 299.]

[2] See *Glenarvon*, ii. 258.

[3] Moore's *Life*, vi. 280.

third person; so that, ultimately, the warp of this woof may turn out to be mere feminine gossip. The friends, however, of Lady Byron, of both sexes, all favour the former view of the matter—they believe in a dark crime. She had, say they, to speak but one word to solve the mystery and to bring the dread secret to the clear light of day; but one single word, to establish her perfect innocence, to unmask her husband, and prove him to be a miscreant. They vaunted the moral courage and magnanimity of the noble and much-enduring victim, in refusing to speak this word; with what right, is now to appear.

This one word has at last been actually spoken, and spoken, it is pretended, according to the last solemn commission of Lady Byron. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the authoress of some well-known romances, has published a paper entitled 'The True History of Lady Byron's Life,'[1] in which she declares that the cause of separation was, that Byron committed incest with his sister, and that lady Byron discovered it. In the first place the charge is not new, but was an open secret long before the publication of the too notorious 'Macmillan' article: years ago, it was whispered to ourselves in London, 'she found out that he had an improper connection with Mrs. Leigh.' Had it not become an inevitable necessity, we protest that we should never have soiled our page with this tale of vice. The war among the journals, kindled by this so-called revelation, still rages; but, without awaiting its final issue, it may even now be said, that the mystery has at last in the main been solved, but solved in a way, very different indeed, from what Mrs. Beecher Stowe thought and intended. Mrs. Beecher Stowe has tarnished not only her own reputation but the reputation of Lady Byron, while

[1] Macmillan's *Magazine*, September, 1869, pp. 377–396. The editor has moreover guaranteed Mrs. Stowe's account, and vouches for its being really Lady Byron's own account.

in a manner altogether unlooked for she vindicates Lord Byron. It seems a strange fatality, that women, not merely in his lifetime but even after his death, should constantly have been betrayed into conduct with respect to him, so utterly unfeminine, notwithstanding an ostentatious pretension on their part to piety and virtue.

In the year 1856, so she relates, Lady Byron, with whom she had formed an intimate friendship, and who then thought that her end was near, invited Mrs. Stowe to visit her, as she anxiously desired to make a confidential communication; that Lady Byron then, in the solemn hour, of what she thought her approaching death, revealed to her the terrible secret, and not only by word of mouth, but entrusted also to her care a brief memorandum relating to it. This document she took home, kept for two days and then returned. It was Lady Byron's wish, in making this communication, to ascertain from Mrs. Stowe, as a perfectly disinterested person and unconnected with English society, her opinion, whether it were not her (Lady Byron's) duty, even at the expense of her feelings, to reveal the long-suppressed truth, in order that the ruinous influence of Byron's writings on the world, especially on the young, might be counteracted: that several friends had *proposed the question to her, whether she had not a responsibility to society for the truth.*[1] Mrs. Stowe replied to this interrogation, that although such an act of justice might be demanded, Lady Byron would be warranted in causing the truth, so painful to her feelings, to be disclosed only after her death, and, finally, recommended her to entrust all the necessary facts to some trustworthy persons to be published on the occurrence of that event.[2] What Mrs. Stowe relates of the heavenly radiance which illumined the pale ethereal face of Lady Byron during this scene;

[1] Macmillan's *Magazine*, September, 1869, p. 394.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 396.

of the sublime love, with which she recognised the god-like genius of her husband, in spite of all the defilements which had overgrown it; of her conviction, which nothing could shake, that he was now a redeemed spirit, who with shame and repentance looked back on the sins of his earthly life—this and similar twaddle, with which the good lady has embellished her history, we simply and silently pass over.

We do not, however, mean to rank this narrative exactly in the same category with the romances of the celebrated authoress of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' although its truth has been more than questioned by competent judges. The solicitors at least of Lady Byron's surviving relatives have declared,[1] that Mrs. Stowe's account is by no means complete and authentic, and that it must not be regarded as Lady Byron's statement. They further allege, that 'Lady Byron, by her last will and testament, executed a few days only before her decease, bequeathed to three persons as trustees all her manuscripts, to be by them first sealed up, afterwards deposited in a bank in the names of such trustees, and she directed that no one else, however nearly connected with her, should upon any plea whatever, be allowed to inspect such documents, which the trustees were alone to make use of as they might judge to be best for the interests of her grandchildren.'[2] The directions that these manuscripts should be kept secret even from her grandchildren appear now, however, to have been set aside, and should have also, under present circumstances, no longer any force. Lord Wentworth, too, Lady Byron's grandson, has declared in a letter[3] written to

[1] *Letter of Messrs. Wharton and Fords to the Editor of the Times*, Sept. 1, 1869.

[2] [His lordship's letter was written in answer to the subjoined paragraph in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: 'The tone of the letter [illegible]

the editor of the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' that he is intimately acquainted with the history of his grandmother, and

the newspapers by Messrs. Wharton and Fords, the solicitors of the "descendants and representatives of Lady Noel Byron," is not easily reconcilable with a prevalent belief among persons likely to be well informed, that the said descendants and representatives had some time since made up their minds to publish the correspondence in their keeping relating to Lord and Lady Byron's conjugal differences. Whatever may have been the reason which ultimately determined Lord Wentworth and his sister to postpone the publication of their grandmother's papers, Mrs. Stowe cannot be such a flagrant offender against propriety in publishing what Lady Byron told her without injunction of secrecy, if her own grandchildren have already seriously thought of printing her correspondence' . . . (Occasional notes of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, September 3, 1869.) We give Lord Wentworth's reply in full.

'Sir,—In your number of September 3, you say that Mrs. Stowe is not a flagrant offender against proprieties, because my sister and I are supposed to have intended to publish correspondence relating to Lord and Lady Byron's conjugal differences.

'Now, supposing Mrs. Stowe's narrative to have been really a "true story," and that we had meant to reveal the whole of our grandmother's history, I do not see what defence that is to Mrs. Stowe against the charge of repeating what was told her in a "private, confidential conversation."

'But it is not true that Lady Anne Blunt and I ever intended to publish correspondence of the nature mentioned. About three years ago a manuscript in Lady Noel Byron's handwriting was found among her papers, giving an account of some circumstances connected with her marriage, and apparently intended for publication after her death; but as this seemed not quite certain, no decision as to its publication was come to. In the event of a memoir being written, this manuscript might, perhaps, be included, but hitherto it has not been proposed to publish any other matter about her separation.

'This statement in Lady Byron's own handwriting does not contain any accusation of so grave a nature as that which Mrs. Stowe asserts was told her, and Mrs. Stowe's story of the separation is inconsistent with what I have seen in various letters, &c., of Lady Byron's.

'Lady Byron says in her own statement, that before being published it ought to be submitted to some person, who had read through the consumed Byron memoirs, so as to secure the correction of any mis-statements. I cannot see that Messrs. Wharton and Fords make no charge of material inaccuracy against Mrs. Stowe; I believe they meant to assert the inaccuracy of the whole article. I, for one, cannot allow that Mrs.

especially with the period of her married life and of the separation, and on the authority of notes in her own hand-writing, he asserts that the narrative of Mrs. Stowe is untrue. Whether this denial is to be unconditionally received admits of question: denials, at the present day, notoriously do not stand in very high estimation, even when they are made in terms less guarded than those used by Lord Wentworth. Mrs. Stowe has at any rate richly deserved such a rebuke: for although she appears by no means to have promised silence to Lady Byron, and has not perhaps in her 'Revelations' acted contrary to her Ladyship's meaning, she has acted in opposition to the spirit of the advice she herself gave to Lady Byron. What grounds had she to publish to the world such a tale of impurity, from which even as a woman she was doubly bound to hold aloof? She desired, she says, to meet the accusations against Lady Byron contained in the book of the Countess Guiccioli, which she characterises as 'the mistress *versus* the wife.' But surely this was the business of the family or of their solicitors,—it was clearly not her affair; not to mention that the imputations of the Countess Guiccioli do not go beyond what had been said again and again before her, and said with justice against Lady Byron. It causes no pain to the pious soul of Mrs. Stowe to heap accusations on the dead, who cannot defend themselves; she appears to think that the end justifies the means, and that the godly are exempt from the application of the ordinary standards of morality. She might, no doubt, have considered herself

Stowe's statement is substantially correct (according to your inference, and that of one or two other newspapers).

'Requesting the favour of the insertion of my explanation in your valuable journal, I remain, your obedient servant,

WENTWORTH.']

assured from any feelings of respect to the memory of Byron, it is of course, before and after his death, was considered by the press which as proscribed and outlawed. But her feelings as a woman should have restrained her from assailing with such misery the memory of Mrs. Leigh, especially as some of Mrs. Leigh's children are still living. That from her religious point of view she should be ready to impute to Byron every possible deed of infamy is conceivable: but what could entitle her to hold Mrs. Leigh capable of such an enormity? Where in Mrs. Leigh's life and character could she find any ground for such an accusation? Here, too, Mrs. Stowe betrays an utter want of the discrimination requisite for the sifting and weighing of evidence. Mrs. Leigh was at least five, if not eight years older than her brother; her marriage was, as far as we know, a happy one; she had several children, and generally lived at a distance from her brother. She was, as he himself points out, more a mother than a sister to him. Yet according to Mrs. Stowe, this criminal intercourse subsisted when Byron married—nay, he married, she would have us believe, only to conceal it. What this may mean it is very hard, indeed, to understand. How could incest be concealed by marriage? On the contrary, marriage surely would have been the most certain way of bringing the dark secret to light. But yet more. Byron, appealing to the loose morality of continental marriages—so Mrs. Stowe avers—demanded of his wife the toleration of this incestuous relation, and on his side promised a corresponding indulgence! Apart from every other consideration, this statement is absolute nonsense. Had such a criminal intercourse actually subsisted, Byron would assuredly have concealed it under an impenetrable veil. In a word, the point of view, *credo quia absurdum est*, is the only one which allows belief in

such monstrous assertions. Finally, in support of the veracity of her revelations Mrs. Stowe appeals to 'Manfred,' in which Byron, as she infers, clearly confessed his guilt; with what justice this is said will be shown in another place.

But we are not yet at the end of the 'Revelations.' Mrs. Stowe had spoken of a child of sin, the offspring of the incestuous intercourse between brother and sister, which the angelic Lady Byron adopted and brought up, until, by the death of this child, she was freed from the responsibility she had incurred. Shortly after the publication of the 'Macmillan article,' there appeared, under the editorship of Mr. Charles Mackay, a book which claims to be the autobiography of this child.[1] Did not the name of an author of respectability stand on the title-page, we should have been induced to believe it a fraud, especially as the name of the gentleman to whom the MS. of the autobiography and of the other documents relating to it belongs, is indicated only by his initial letters. It is a tale of guilt and shame almost without parallel. The eldest daughter of Mrs. Leigh, Georgiana, married in the year 1826 a distant relation, Mr. Henry Trevanion, a gentleman without fortune and of a not very compatible temper. Three years after their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Trevanion retired to a country house near Canterbury, belonging to Lady Byron, which she had placed at their disposal, where Georgiana was to await her impending confinement. She took with her her fourth sister, Elizabeth Medora, then only fourteen years old, to be helpful to her and afford her some society. While living here—incredible as it may sound—Medora was ere long seduced

[1] *Medora Leigh*, a history and an autobiography, edited by Charles Mackay. London, 1869.

by her own brother-in-law, eventually revealed her condition to her sister, and along with her and her husband went to Calais, where she was secretly confined. Returning to England she continued her criminal intimacy with her brother-in-law, and was again obliged to confess her state, not only to her sister, but also to her mother. Colonel Leigh, whose favourite daughter she had hitherto been, believing her insane, confined her in a private lunatic asylum, from which, however, she escaped, through the assistance of Trevanion, and followed him to Normandy, where they lived under the assumed names of Monsieur and Madame Aubin. Georgiana now—the narrative goes on to say—professed an intention of obtaining a divorce—at least she feigned this desire in order, perhaps, to pacify her sister, who was then to be married to Trevanion! Since, however, according to the law of England, a man cannot marry the sister of his deceased or divorced wife, the worthy pair, not to rob the wretched Medora of all hope, told her, that Colonel Leigh was not her father, although it does not appear that they specified to whom she owed her existence.[1] This she was induced to believe—as she says—the more readily, because neither she nor her sisters had ever been brought up to reverence and love their father. As, however, no divorce could be effected, she had resolution enough, after again giving birth to a daughter, to free herself from her shocking relation to her brother-in-law. Left by her mother without the requisite means of support, she applied in her distress to her aunt, Lady Byron, who in the most affectionate manner promised to assist her, appointed to meet her at Tours, and then took her and her child to Paris. From thence they went to Fontainebleau, where Lady Byron

[1] *Medora Leigh*, p. 127.

fell ill and revealed (1840) to her niece, that she was the daughter of her uncle Lord Byron;[1] adding at the same time, that on this ground, she felt, and would ever feel, the deepest sympathy and love for her. In the following year Medora returned with her aunt to England, but soon, as she says, was convinced that Lady Byron, in spite of all her professions of love, did not really intend to provide for her; and that she gradually found it quite impossible to accommodate herself to her temper and to her peculiar humours and arrangements. The health of Medora, now completely undermined, made it, moreover, requisite that she should return to the south of France in compliance with the advice of her physicians. Here she lived for some time in great poverty, Lady Byron refusing to allow her a fixed income, though she subjected her to the surveillance of a servant and his wife. In the hands of these persons, to whom even the remittances of money were sent by Lady Byron, Medora remained in a state of semi-captivity. She went finally to Paris, where she applied to Berryer for advice and help, and came in the summer of 1843 with her child to London. Her relatives, however, turned a deaf ear to her cries of distress; her mother refused to receive her, and would not even see her. The letter, which, in these circumstances, she addressed to her mother, Dr. Mackay has not ventured to print. The only one who took any interest in her was the Mr. S——, to whom she gave her papers, and who, through Dr. Mackay, has made them public. At the end of 1843, Medora again disappeared from London, and soon afterwards found rest in the grave.

Such is a summary of this latest sad 'revelation.' As the editor has clearly and convincingly shown, a young

[1] *Medora Leigh*, p. 135.

nothing as to Byron's guilt. In this respect it is perfectly indifferent whether this story be true or false; but this is one reason among many why this revolting story should never have seen the light. Whence could the Trevanions, who in the year 1831 first called in question the paternity of Colonel Leigh with respect to the fourth daughter,[1] have gained the knowledge of this pretended fact? If they did not invent the charge for the purpose of obtaining the wished for-divorce, which is by no means inconceivable, they may, perhaps, have received it through their intimacy with Mrs. Clermont, who had been the servant and governess of Lady Byron, and who lived in her family.[2] For the success of their scheme, it concerned the Trevanions only to assert, that Colonel Leigh was not the father of their sister: who the father might be, was to them a matter of indifference. Who added the positive half of the charge, and how this was communicated to Lady Byron, remains still unexplained. Was it by Mrs. Trevanion or by Mrs. Clermont?

Perhaps by neither of them. According to our conviction, the mysterious communication made by Lady Byron to Dr. Lushington referred to this point, and Byron and his sister learnt soon after the separation the accusation which had been brought against them. We greatly regret, that it has not been in our power to examine the English journals of the year 1816; but from Byron's letters it is very clear, that the press even then pointed not obscurely to the crime laid to his charge, and it is by no means incredible, that the Trevanions derived their knowledge from this source. The fact that this

[1] It may here be remarked, in passing, that Mr. and Mrs. Leigh had altogether seven children.

[2] Such is the suggestion of Dr. Charles Mackay. See *Medora Leigh*, p. 215, 216.

accusation was made must have been revealed by some friend to Byron during his residence in Switzerland, for only under this supposition are his expressions and conduct to be understood in their true connection. Let us first hear what he himself says:—'I shall return (to England) with the same feelings with which I left it, in respect to itself, though altered with regard to individuals, as I have been more or less informed of their conduct since my departure; for it was only a considerable time after it, that I was made acquainted with the real facts and full extent of some of their proceedings and language. My friends, like other friends, from conciliatory motives, withheld from me much that they could, and some things which they *should* have unfolded: however, that which is deferred is not lost—but it has been no fault of mine that it has been deferred at all.'[1] 'I was accused,' he says in the same place, 'of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour; my name, which had been a knightly or a noble one, since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered, and muttered, and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me.'[2] In a letter written at a later period,[3] when he regarded the matter somewhat more quietly, he enumerates the offensive epithets which had been applied to him by the press after his separation; he mentions only some: Nero, Apicius, Epicurus, Caligula, Heliogabalus, Henry VIII., and finally the ——.' With the names of Nero, Apicius, Caligula, Heliogabalus, he was manifestly only honoured

[1] Some observations upon an article in Blackwood's *Magazine*. *Life and Works*, xv. 72.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 66.

[3] [The translator is unable to find the letter referred to. The author has probably in his mind a conversation reported on the authority of Medwin, p. 61.]

because their bearers, one and all, had been accused of unnatural vices. The comparison otherwise would have had no meaning, for the cruelty of Nero or the gluttony of Apicius could never be laid to Byron's charge.

Hence, too, the explanation of the poems addressed to his sister which were written in Switzerland. From the first to their last line they afford an unmistakable proof, that his relation to her was the tenderest and the purest of his whole life; and it is simply impossible, that he could have written them with a conscience laden with guilt. With the affectionate cravings of his nature, he had, when his marriage began to take an unhappy turn, attached himself more closely and tenderly to his sister, in whom he found that sympathy, indulgence, and confidence, which he found in no other person. Never, therefore, does he display a more sincere respect or a more tender regard than for her. All the harder, then, was his fate, that the darkest calumnies should be directed against him just where he knew himself to be most pure and stainless. But the poems to Augusta prove further, that she too was cognisant of the calumnious accusations; for under no other supposition is it possible to understand their allusions. How otherwise are these passages to be interpreted? For instance, the stanza in 'Childe Harold,' written in Switzerland—

> And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
> Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
> Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
> *That* love was pure, and, far above disguise,
> Had stood the test of mortal enmities
> Still undivided, and cemented more
> By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
> But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
> Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour![1]

[1] Cant. iii. st. 55.

Or the 'Stanzas to Augusta'—

> And when the cloud upon us came
> Which strove to blacken o'er thy ray—
> Then purer spread its gentle flame
> And dash'd the darkness all away.[1]

Or, again, in the second poem addressed to her, dated July 24, 1816:

> Though slandered, thou never couldst shake.[2]

Hence also the explanation of the change which took place in Switzerland in Byron's manner of speaking of his wife. At first, just after the separation, he dwells on the favourable aspects of her character, and not only speaks of her with respect, but expressly declares her blameless, and imputes all blame to himself. 'I do not believe,' he writes to Moore, March 8, 1816, 'and I must say it, in the very dregs of this bitter business, that there ever was a better, or even a brighter, a kinder, or a more amiable and agreeable being than Lady Byron. I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make her while with me; where there is blame, it belongs to myself, and if I cannot redeem, I must bear it.'[3] Some days later than this (March 25) he asks Rogers, whom he on this occasion describes as one of his few intimate friends, to have the goodness to say 'whether you ever heard me speak of her with disrespect, with unkindness, or defending myself at *her* expense by any serious imputation of any description against *her*? The reason I put these questions to you or others of my friends is, because I am said by her and hers to have resorted to such means of exculpation.'[4] In this, so to speak, first stage of his life after the separation, it was Mrs. Clermont and his mother-in-law (the father-in-law plays in the whole

[1] Moore's *Life and Works*, x. 194.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 198.
[3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 205.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 217.

affair the part of a mere cipher), whom he accused of prejudicing and exciting his wife against him, and of causing her to leave him. 'This is Mrs. Clermont's work,' he said when he put his name and seal to the deed of separation.[1] In the poem entitled 'A Sketch,' he says of his wife:

> Serenely purest of her sex that live,
> But wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive.[2]

But when he was informed in Switzerland of the last horrible accusation, his feelings towards her passed into another stage. Henceforward her character appeared to him in another light: now he saw only its darker sides, and his exasperation was increased by her rejection of all his attempts at reconciliation. Hence the explanation of the bitter tone of the lines he wrote (September 1816), on hearing that Lady Byron was ill:—

> Of thy virtues didst thou make a vice;

in which also he calls her

> The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord.[3]

Hence, lastly, the explanation of the sketch which he drew in the first canto of 'Don Juan,' where he describes their marriage and separation; the characteristics of his wife being unmistakably attributed to Donna Inez.

Quite in harmony with our view is the following declaration—published for the first time in the 'Academy,'[4]—which Byron drew up at La Mira, August 9, 1817, in all probability at the instigation of his friend Hobhouse, who at that time was residing at Venice. 'It has been intimated to me'—so he says in this document,—'that the persons understood to be the legal advisers of Lady Byron,

[1] *Quarterly Review*, October 1869, p. 418. [2] *Works*, x. 190.
[3] *Works*, x. 208. [4] October 9, 1869.

have declared "their lips to be sealed up" on the cause of the separation between her and myself. If their lips are sealed up, they are not sealed up by me, and the greatest favour they can confer upon me will be to open them. From the first hour in which I was apprised of the intentions of the Noel family to the last communication between Lady Byron and myself in the character of wife and husband (a period of some months), I called repeatedly and in vain for a statement of their or her charges, and it was chiefly in consequence of Lady Byron's claiming (in a letter still existing) a promise on my part to consent to a separation if such was *really* her wish, that I consented at all; this claim and the exasperating and inexplicable manner in which their object was pursued, which rendered it next to an impossibility that two persons so divided could ever be re-united, induced me reluctantly then, and repentantly still, to sign the deed, which I shall be happy—most happy—to cancel, and go before any tribunal which may discuss the business in the most public manner.

'Mr. Hobhouse made this proposition on my part, viz., to abrogate all prior intentions—and go into Court—the very day before the separation was signed, and it was declined by the other party, as also the publication of the correspondence during the previous discussion. Those propositions I beg here to repeat, and to call upon her and hers to say their worst, pledging myself to meet their allegations—whatever they may be—and only too happy to be informed at last of their real nature.

(Signed) 'BYRON.

'August 9, 1817.

'P.S.—I have been, and am now, utterly ignorant of what description her allegations, charges, or whatever name they may have assumed, are; and am as little aware

for what purpose they have been kept back—unless it was to sanction the most infamous calumnies by silence.

(Signed) 'BYRON.

'La Mira, near Venice.'

Undeniably this unfeigned candour of Byron, and his readiness to come before the world, speak loudly in his favour and show that his conscience was clear; whereas the persistent reticence of his antagonists makes the worst impression and at once excites a prejudice against them.

One additional circumstance deserves to be considered. Was it not to be expected, that Byron in his Memoirs would have explained the suspicions under which he lay and the origin of them, and have proved or at least averred his innocence? Yet Moore[1] asserts that these Memoirs afforded no light whatever on the mysterious cause of the separation; but as in the same breath he is obliged to admit, that he has suppressed very much relating to it, which he found among the letters and journals of Byron, it seems justifiable to receive his assertion with some doubt. How would Moore have been regarded by the world if, after consenting to the destruction of these Memoirs, he had admitted, that the solution of the mystery was contained in them? Our hesitation to accept Moore's statement implicitly is strengthened by an expression of Sir Walter Scott, who while lamenting that Byron's executors were only to be satisfied by their entire destruction, adds, 'there was a ground—*Premat nox alta*!'[2] Is it possible now to misunderstand this?

Thus everything forces us to the supposition, that the charge of incest was the secret charge made by Lady Byron and submitted to Dr. Lushington; that this charge

[1] *Life*, vi. 264.

[2] Nov. 21, 1825. Lockhart's *Life*, viii. 116. Edin. 1857.

was known to Byron and his sister soon after the separation; that it was even at that period pointed at in the public press, and was already an open secret. Two difficulties, however, stand in the way of the admission of these inferences; first, Lady Byron's friendly relations with her sister-in-law even after the separation; and, secondly, Byron's re-iterated assertions that it was utterly unknown to him why his wife separated from him.

With regard to Lady Byron's continued intimacy with Mrs. Leigh, this is established beyond doubt by the letters and notes overflowing with tenderness and ardent professions of love, which Lady Byron after the catastrophe addressed to Mrs. Leigh from Kirkby Mallory, and which were published for the first time in the 'Quarterly Review.'[1] These are of such importance that we give them at length.

'You will think me very foolish, but I have tried two or three times and cannot *talk* to you of your departure with a decent visage—so let me say one word in this way, to spare my philosophy. With the expectations which I have, I never will nor can ask you to stay one moment longer than you are inclined to do. It would [be] the worst return for all I ever received from you. But, in this at least, I *am* "truth itself" when I say that whatever the situation may be, there is no one whose society is dearer to me, or can contribute more to my happiness. These feelings will not change under any circumstances, and I should be grieved if you did not understand them. Should you hereafter condemn me, I shall not love you less. I will say no more. Judge for yourself about going or staying. I wish you to consider *yourself*, if you could be wise enough to do that for the first time in your life.

'Thine, A. I. B.'

[1] Number for October 1869, pp. 414, 415.

Addressed on the cover 'To the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.'[1]

'Kirkby Mallory, Jan. 16, 1816
(the day after she left London).

'MY DEAREST A.,—It is my great comfort that you are in Piccadilly.'

'Kirkby Mallory, Jan. 23, 1816.

'DEAREST A.,—I know you feel for me as I do for you, and perhaps I am better understood than I think. You have been, ever since I knew you, my best comforter, and will so remain, unless you grow tired of the office, which may well be.'

'Jan. 25, 1816.

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—Shall I still be your sister? I must resign my rights to be so considered; but I don't think that will make any difference in the kindness I have so uniformly experienced from you.'

'Kirkby Mallory, Feb. 3, 1816.

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—You are desired by your brother to ask, if my father has acted with my concurrence in proposing a separation. He has. It cannot be supposed that, in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating in a detailed manner the reasons which will not only justify this measure, but compel me to take it; and it never can be my wish to remember *unnecessarily* [*sic*] those injuries for which, however deep, I feel no resentment. I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage, as finding it quite insupportable, though candidly acknowledging that no effort of duty or

[1] The date of this letter is not given.

affection has been wanting on my part. He has too painfully convinced me that all these attempts to contribute towards his happiness were wholly useless, and most unwelcome to him. I enclose this letter to my father, wishing it to receive his sanction.

'Ever yours most affectionately,

'A. I. BYRON.'

'Feb. 4, 1816.

'I hope, my dear A., that you would on no account withhold from your brother the letter which I sent yesterday, in answer to yours written by his desire; particularly as one which I have received from himself to-day renders it still more important that he should know the contents of that addressed to you. I am, in haste and not very well, yours most affectionately,

A. I. BYRON.'

'Kirkby Mallory, Feb. 14, 1816.

'The present sufferings of all may yet be repaid in blessings. Do not despair absolutely, dearest; and leave me but enough of your interest to afford you any consolation, by partaking of that sorrow which I am most unhappy to cause thus unintentionally. *You will* be of my opinion hereafter, and at present your bitterest reproach would be forgiven; though Heaven knows you have considered me more than a thousand would have done—more than anything but my affection for B., one most dear to you, could deserve. I must not remember these feelings. Farewell! God bless you, from the bottom of my heart.

'A. I. B.'

Her feelings to her sister-in law 'will not change under any circumstances'—so she protests in the first of these letters; but change they did; for there is indisputable testimony to prove, that Lady Byron, after the death of Mrs. Leigh (1851), retailed the story of incest not only

to Mrs. Stowe, but to many other persons with various extravagant additions. Knowing, as we do, how Lady Byron, merely in compliance with the advice of a physician, wrote to her husband the most affectionate and unaffectedly cheerful letter while on the road to Kirkby Mallory, we candidly confess, that we can lay no weight on her assurances. If we admit that they were written in good faith, and that they prove, that Lady Byron had at that time entertained no suspicion of incest, what becomes of the communication which at that very time she made to Dr. Lushington? For if the secret imparted referred to something else, surely Dr. Lushington could not pretend to see any breach of confidence, were he to declare publicly, that the disclosure made to him had nothing in common with the revelation of Mrs. Stowe. The friendly understanding between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh continued moreover to exist till Byron's death, if not longer: Mrs. Leigh was the person through whom all communications between the husband and the wife were made, and Byron's last unfinished letter to her begins with these words:—'My dearest Augusta, a few days ago I received your and Lady Byron's account of Ada's health.' It is difficult to see how facts apparently so contradictory are to be reconciled. While we feel that obscurity rests still, and perhaps ever will, on a history so full of conflicting elements, one point at least seems placed beyond all doubt—that Byron did not commit the monstrous crime laid to his charge.

It is comparatively easier to solve the second difficulty, viz., that Byron to the last maintained, that he was ignorant why Lady Byron had separated from him, and that to people in general he was in the habit of attributing the separation to trivial causes. When some

in Cephalonia was enumerating the various grounds

which were alleged for it (incest, of course, excepted), he answered: 'The causes, my dear Sir, were too simple to be easily found out.'[1] However unreserved he was in other things, it is easy to understand, that, from regard to his sister, he could not allude to *that* charge, at least to strangers. He was so far in ignorance of the motives of his wife in leaving him that she never openly preferred her accusation against him, and what he knew he owed only to the confidential communications of his friends.

But how—this is the next question—could so horrible a suspicion arise in Lady Byron's mind? But how do idiosyncrasies and hallucinations arise at all? For that this suspicion, at least at a later date, took the form of a mental delusion, is undeniable; this is the mildest interpretation which can be given to the conduct of Lady Byron. It has been excellently remarked by the writer in the 'Quarterly Review:' 'Lady Byron could at first account for her gifted husband's conduct on no hypothesis but insanity; and now by a sort of Nemesis there is no other hypothesis on which the moralist can charitably account for hers. But there is this marked difference in their maladies; his monomania lay in being an impossible sinner, and hers in being an impossible saint. He was the faulty and she the faultless monster the world ne'er knew. He in his mad moods did his best to blacken his own reputation, whilst her self-delusions invariably tended to damage the character of all that were nearest and should have been dearest to her. Which was the more dangerous or less amiable delusion of the two?'[2]

We are not, however, altogether without an Ariadne-thread in this labyrinth. Lady Byron was only too disposed always to believe the worst of her husband. She was

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 212.

[2] *Quarterly Review*, October 1869, pp. 441, 442.

one of those persons who could not understand a joke, and least of all the jokes which Byron loved to make at his own expense. His self-accusations, which were probably nothing but bad jests and mystifications, she took literally. She was, moreover, of a jealous nature, and, as she had neither brother nor sister, she hardly possessed the quality of heart which makes tender sisterly love possible. In such a character a spark was enough to kindle the least suspicion into a flame, and this spark, doubtless, Mrs. Clermont supplied. Unhappily this person was much in Lady Byron's confidence, and had acquired an ascendency over her and her family. Byron, on the other hand, had conceived an aversion to her, which he took no trouble to conceal, and which she repaid 'with a vengeance.' He scarcely overshot the mark when he called her a 'she-Iago.' She had only to contrast Byron's regard and tenderness for his sister with his cold, abrupt manner to his wife: she had only to let fall the remark, that she was really only his half-sister, and that they had not grown up together: she had only to represent such a love between brother and sister as excessive and unbecoming: and hints such as these, thrown out by her, would bear fruit a thousand-fold. Possibly Byron himself may, in moments of irritation, have uttered inconsiderate expressions hurtful to his wife's feelings, which appeared to corroborate the germinating suspicion. Perhaps he may even have hinted, after his usual manner, at a guilty, overmastering passion for his sister. He had so long played in poetical fancy with crime and the consciousness of guilt, that at last the ineffaceable suspicion of guilt fell in bitterest reality on his head. It was just one of those cases in which persons who have surrendered themselves to preconceived opinions, prefer the most unnatural mode of explanation to every other, and refuse to be per-

suaded by the most natural and simple. If the facts were really in accordance with these conjectures, then, we are convinced, the suspicion must have ripened in Lady Byron's mind either immediately before or immediately after the separation. For, had Lady Byron cherished it at an earlier period, she would scarcely have consented that Mrs. Leigh should be godmother to her child, and that the child should be named after her. If, contrary to all expectation, it should turn out, that Lady Byron's disclosures to Dr. Lushington had no reference to the charge of incest, her monomania must have been of a later growth, and her character would then at least be cleared from the charge of duplicity to her sister-in-law, to whom she feigned love, while in her heart she entertained the foulest suspicion against her. One word of explanation from Dr. Lushington—but this alone —would terminate all conjectures and all doubts. The whole matter has come to a point, where the letter should yield to the spirit, and when, in defiance of testamentary dispositions of every kind, not only the papers left behind by Lady Byron, but those of Hobhouse, should be published. Were the latter still living, we feel persuaded he would come forward to defend his friend, and, the publication of the memoir he has left of all the questions connected with the marriage and separation would at any rate be an act in accordance with his own directions. Thus only can the just claim of the world to the knowledge of the full truth be satisfied; thus only can justice be done to the memory of all persons concerned. Whatever the secret may be, the character neither of Byron nor of his wife can be further injured by its publication. The latter, indeed, is self-condemned, inasmuch as she first prevented her husband from even being heard in his own defence by the destruction of the 'Memoirs,' which was promoted chiefly

by her, and then formally bequeathed Memoranda of her own case, besides communicating to others her own version of her woes. She even awaited the death of her sister-in-law before she ventured to come forward, unabashed, with her accusations. She has thereby forfeited the respect of all unprejudiced and right-minded persons, unless a state of irresponsibility be accepted as a ground of extenuation. Well, assuredly, may she from her grave apply to Mrs. Stowe the saying, 'Heaven save me from my friends!' for the arrow discharged by the 'revelation' of the latter has recoiled on Lady Byron herself, while her husband has come forth only purer from the intended defilement.

Notwithstanding all these arguments, it may still appear improbable to many readers, that Lady Byron should have got into such a state of delusion. But doubt disappears, when we recall the case, so much talked of at the time, of Mrs. Mardyn the actress, which in many respects was a prelude to the terrible charge against the brother and sister. This case clearly shows, how a perfectly groundless suspicion not only could arise in Lady Byron's mind, but could so master her that a catastrophe must be the result. From the time that he wrote his successful prologue for the re-opening of Drury Lane Theatre, Byron became not only a constant frequenter of the theatre, but one of the shareholders and a member also of the committee of management. In this capacity he had to examine the pieces sent in for performance (in one year they amounted to upwards of 500) to negotiate with their authors, and frequently also to mix with the actors and actresses, to compose their grievances and disputes, to decide on engagements and the filling up of the parts. Life behind the scenes has at no time been [illegible]uous for its morality, and Lady Byron might be

excused, if she considered it a dangerous and critical ordeal for her too susceptible husband, and even if she felt some pangs of jealousy. But it is said that she proceeded so far as to break open and search Byron's writing desk.[1] The only questionable things found in it were the letters of a married lady, with whom Byron, before his marriage, had been too intimately acquainted. It sounds almost incredible, but rumour added that she sent these to the husband of the lady, who, however, took no notice of the affair.[2] The beautiful actress, Mrs. Mardyn, was soon pointed at as the mistress of Byron, and calumny pretended to know, that he had introduced her into his house and paid her attentions which were most offensive to his wife's feelings.[3] The talk of the town penetrating into every quarter called forth such indignation in the virtuous public, that Mrs. Mardyn was hissed off the stage and overwhelmed with insults and abuse. Yet, as it was afterwards discovered, Mrs. Mardyn not only had never been in Byron's house, but had scarcely ever exchanged a single word with him.

Although Lady Byron thus appears filled with jealousy both of Mrs. Mardyn and of Mrs. Leigh, we must guard against a too possible misunderstanding. Lady Byron's jealousy sprang from no common or coarse motives, but rather from a moral source. She considered it her vocation to take her husband under her moral protection and to bring him back, if possible, to the paths of virtue; she felt herself to a certain extent his conscience, and she had married him, as Lady Caroline Lamb said,

[1] [This story rests solely on the very questionable authority of Captain Medwin (*Conversations*, pp. 53, 54). Nor has Dr. Elze strictly followed Medwin's report of the alleged conversation: in the original, the breaking open of Lord Byron's writing desk is not attributed to Lady Byron, but Mrs. Clermont.]

[2] Medwin's *Conversations*, pp. 53, 54.

[3] *Ibid.*

only to save and reclaim him.[1] This was the natural and necessary result of her moral and religious views of life and the world, which differed widely from those of her husband. Difference of religious views has often been regarded as one of the causes of the unhappiness of their married life, and Parry[2] did not hesitate to say as much at Missolonghi to Byron himself; who, however, denied the imputation, and replied, that his wife was liberal in her religious ideas, an assertion which, in a certain sense, was true. Not long, however, before this, Byron had expressed himself somewhat differently to Kennedy: 'Lady Byron,' so Kennedy reports him as saying, 'is a great Socinian and is highly esteemed by them. She and I had very many discussions on Religion, and some of our quarrels rose from this source; but when I put all things together, I find that her religion was very like mine.'[3] That religious differences subsisted between the husband and wife is certain; only their dissension must not be viewed as if it were between Socinianism and Calvinism, for this would reach only the formal, external difference, and would not describe its essence. The antagonism lay rather between dogmatism and belief in authority on Lady

[1] *Glenarvon*, iii. 100. ['Miss Monmouth (i.e. Miss Milbanke) was the idol of her family. She was pure herself and therefore unsuspicious. Talents and judgment had been given her with no sparing hand; but to these she added the warmest, the most generous heart, the strongest feeling, and a high and noble character. To save, to reclaim one, whose genius she admired, whose beauty attracted, was a task too delightful to be rejected. Thousands daily sacrifice their hearts to mercenary and ambitious views; thousands coldly, without one feeling of enthusiasm or love, sell themselves for a splendid name; and can there be a mind so cold, so corrupted, as to censure the girl, who . . . . gave her hand and heart, and all that she possessed, to save, to bless, and to reclaim a Glenarvon?']

[2] *Last Days of Lord Byron*. London, 1825, p. 219.

[3] Kennedy, *Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron and others*, p. 135.

Byron's side, and scepticism and free thought on his, to whatever religious communion or sect they might externally have belonged. 'Lady Byron,' says Parry, 'is manifestly more influenced by the dogmas than by the love and charity of religion.'[1] As in everything else, she was guided even in her religious views by the precisely defined notions in which she had been educated, while, on the contrary, Byron's notions were rather of a negative than a positive character. From dogmatic authority, indeed, he could never altogether liberate himself, but from his doubts would again return to dogma. To his wife, belief resting on authority was in itself a virtue, negation of it sin and madness. This mode of belief, so characteristic of English society, extends itself notoriously to things secular, to the pettiest details of daily life, and even in these tolerates no deviation from the sacredness of traditional custom. On these matters Byron, who had risen by the experience gained through travel to a freer point of view, was often accused of self-willed rebellion and apostasy. Who can say whether the theatre, for which he had always a predilection, was not to his wife an offence and an abomination? By a great part of English society at the present moment the theatre is regarded with disfavour and almost as sinful, quite irrespective of practices behind the scenes. Lady Byron, in a recently published letter,[2] attributes the misery of her married life to Byron's gloomy and profoundly Calvinistic tendencies he saw, she there says, in God only the avenger not the Father, and believed that his transgressions exceeded all forgiveness; that her own views, which were just the reverse, had no influence upon him; that he persisted in

[1] *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 162.

[2] See Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, iii. 435 *et seq.*

the conviction, that to him every blessing transformed itself into a curse, and that he regarded his bodily deformity as the confirmation and stamp of this fixed idea. '"The worst of it is, I *do* believe," he said. I, says Lady Byron, like all connected with him, was broken against the rock of Predestination. I may be pardoned for referring to his frequent expression of the sentiment, that I was only sent to show him the happiness he was forbidden to enjoy. You will now better understand why "The Deformed Transformed" is too painful to me for discussion.'[1]

Not merely morally and religiously had Lady Byron no real knowledge of her husband, but she never displayed an earnest will to understand the character of his intellect or the bent of his disposition. Gervinus,[2] indeed, represents her as a woman of a self-sacrificing and affectionate nature; but this is a great mistake. In the first place, it was hardly true love which led her to marry Byron; like him, she was guided mainly by worldly and selfish motives, so that in this respect she was not blameless. Why, otherwise, should she have rejected his first offer of marriage? When, after rejecting other suitors, she at last accepted him, she was actuated by the vanity of becoming the wife of a man so celebrated, and of being introduced by him into the highest circles of the great world. Byron's circumstances, his past history, his character, were undoubtedly known to her when she gave him her hand; she knew, at any rate, his self-portraiture in 'Childe Harold,' and was acquainted with his intimacy with Lady Caroline Lamb, who was, indeed, nearly related to her. If she had not been conscious of possessing the will and the strength to fulfil with forbearance and patience the difficult duties she had undertaken, she ought not to have married him.

[1] See H. C. Robinson's *Diary, Reminiscences, &c.*, iii. 436.
[2] *Geschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, viii. 148.

But like her husband, she was impulsive by nature and a spoilt child, who set her own self-will against his. Scott,[1] with much regret, alludes from his own acquaintance with her to the capriciousness of her temper, and William Howitt,[2] from his own personal knowledge, also corroborates a like impression by two striking anecdotes; one of which may be here introduced. 'She was in great difficulty as to the selection of a master for her working school at Kirkby Mallory. It was necessary for him to unite the very rarely united qualities of a thoroughly practical knowledge of the operations of agriculture and gardening with the education and information of an accomplished schoolmaster. She asked me to try and discover this *rara avis* for her. I knew exactly such a man in Nottinghamshire, who was at the same time thoroughly honourable, trustworthy, and fond of teaching. At her earnest request I prevailed upon him to give up his then comfortable position and accept her offer. For a time he was everything in her eyes that a man and a schoolmaster could be. She was continually speaking of him when we met in the most cordial terms. But in the course, as I remember, of two or three years, the poor fellow wrote to me in the utmost distress, saying that Lady Byron, without the slightest intimation of being in any way dissatisfied with him, or with his management of the school, had given him notice to quit. He had entreated her to let him know what was the cause of this sudden dismissal. She refused to give any, and he entreated me to write to her and endeavour to remove her displeasure, or to ascertain its cause. I felt, from what I had seen of Lady Byron before, that it was useless. I

[1] Lockhart's *Memoirs*. [The translator confesses his inability to verify this reference.]

[2] *Letter to the Daily News*, September 4, 1869.

wrote to him, "Remember Lord Byron! If Lady Byron has taken into her head that you shall go, nothing will turn her. Go you must, and you had better prepare for it." And the poor fellow, with a family of about five children, and his old situation filled up, turned out into the world to comparative ruin. 'I am sure'—he says in the same place—'that Lady Byron was a woman of the most honourable and conscientious intentions, but she was subject to a constitutional idiosyncrasy of a most peculiar kind, which rendered her, when under its influence, absolutely and persistently unjust. I am quite sure from my own observation of her that, when seized by this peculiar condition of the nerves, she was helplessly under its control. Through this the changes in her mood were sudden, and most painful to all about her. I have seen her of an evening in the most amiable, cordial, and sunny humour, full of interest and sympathy; and I have seen her the next morning come down as if she had lain all night not on a feather bed, but on a glacier—frozen as it were to the very soul, and no efforts on the part of those around her could restore her for the day to a genial social warmth. In such moments she seemed to take sudden and deep impressions against persons and things, which, though the worst might pass away, left a permanent effect.'

This anecdote throws a clear side light on Lady Byron's conduct to her husband. Her behaviour also to Medora Leigh is in perfect accordance with it, and Dr. Mackay[1] judges very rightly in saying, that though the first impulses of Lady Byron were good and noble, her second thoughts were generally cold and unjust; that no dependence was to be placed on her love; that if

[1] *Medora Leigh*, p. 225.

she had sufficient reason for her love in any case, she never appears to have had sufficient reason for her hatred, which was stern, unyielding, and unforgiving. Byron, as reported by Medwin, sketched the following portrait of his wife:—'She was easily made the dupe of the designing, for she thought her knowledge of mankind infallible; she had got some foolish idea of Madame de Staël's into her head, that a person may be better known in the first hour than in ten years. She had the habit of drawing people's characters after she had seen them once or twice. She wrote pages on pages about my character, but it was as unlike as possible. Lady Byron had good ideas, but could never express them, wrote poetry too, but it was only good by accident. Her letters were always enigmatical, often unintelligible. She was governed by what she called fixed rules and principles, squared mathematically. . . . It must be confessed, however, that she gave no proof of her boasted consistency. First she refused me, then she accepted me, then she separated herself from me:—so much for consistency.'[1]

If, instead of her 'fixed rules and principles,' into which she attempted to force her husband, Lady Byron had possessed deeper affections, a gentler and more natural womanhood, she would have been better able to accommodate herself to Byron and to manage him, and would have given no occasion for the remark, so often quoted, of his valet Fletcher, 'that it was strange that all women were able to manage my Lord but my Lady.'[2] How little she understood Byron's genius, is proved by the question, which three weeks after marriage she ventured to ask him, when he intended to lay aside his bad habit of

[1] Byron as reported by Medwin, *Conversations, &c.*, pp. 59-61.

[2] Lady Blessington was of the same opinion. See the anecdote in her *Conversations*, pp. 265, 266.

making verses?[1] She is said, indeed, to have herself made verses, but no doubt for the privacy of her home, or at most the edification of her coterie.[2] Yet to make the measure of contradiction full, Lady Byron, in a letter written in the year 1815, to her friend Lady Anne Barnard, and first published by Lord Lindsay in the 'Times,' criticises severely indeed, but with great truth, the poetry of her husband in the following manner. 'In regard to his poetry, egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified: but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene or time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures in a system impenetrable except to a very few, and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions.'[3] The essence of Byron's character and poetry could not be more strikingly expressed than in these words of Lady Byron, however mistaken she may otherwise have been. That the genius of Byron was an obstacle to happiness in marriage, Moore has very exhaustively shown.[4] Genius, living only in its own ideal world, is not inclined to adapt itself to every-day life, or to tolerate its defects and annoyances; and the poet, to whom Jove's heaven

[1] Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections*, i. 57, Engl. Trans.

[2] According to Gervinus (*Geschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, viii. 148), some of the 'Hebrew Melodies' are said to have come from her hand. The English biographies, however, say not a word of this. Byron, however, incidentally mentions that she prepared the manuscript for the press of the 'Siege of Corinth,' and probably also of 'Parisina.' (Moore's *Life*, iii. 222.) He is said to have often told her, 'Bell, you could be a poet, if you liked.'

Lord Lindsay's Letter to the Editor of the Times, Sept. 3, 1869.

[4] *Life and Letters*, iii. 125 *et seq.* Compare Byron's own words as given by Lady Blessington in her *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 122 *et seq.*, p. 218.

ever stands open, discovers the incompatibility of the fetters and clogs of prosaic common life with his divine aspirations. Genius in accordance with its nature withdraws into its own inner life; it tends to become self-sufficing and self-absorbed. What other mind, compared with his own, could have value to Byron, or excite interest in him? These defects, to use the fine expression of Moore,[1] are the shadow which genius casts. The fancy too of the poet or artist is a foundation far too loose for so solid a building as marriage, and Pegasus fastened to the yoke never becomes a useful plough-horse. In fact almost all great poets, artists, and scholars have led a more or less unhappy domestic life; and it is an ascertained result of experience, that no woman has been happy with a man of genius, nor, conversely, any woman unhappy because of the narrowness of her husband's intellect. Moore mentions the cases of Dante, Petrarch, and Pope: he might have added Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Burns, Mozart, Bürger, Goethe, and a hundred others.

In Byron's case a defective education was superadded to what the character of genius entails. He had never learnt to accommodate himself to others, nor had he ever restrained his capricious and self-willed ways and humours, but on the contrary fostered them; he was, in the highest sense of the word, a spoilt child. The consciousness of duty had never been awakened or cultivated in him; for him the very notion of duty indeed could hardly be said to exist.

If Byron possessed very little of the self-command absolutely requisite for a happy marriage, he must naturally have lost the last remnant of it by the antagonistic character of his wife, and the irritation produced by the shattered state of his fortune. The more fiercely he vented his

[1] *Life*, iii. 208.

he first saw his infant in the cradle, 'Oh what an instrument of torture have I received in thee!' On these and similar points Lady Byron poured out her heart, in the year 1818, both in conversation and by letters, to her old friend Lady Anne Barnard, from whose private family memoirs Lord Lindsay[1] has published the above and other passages. It is, however, only too probable that misunderstanding, exaggeration, and perhaps mortified feelings on Lady Byron's part, colour all these statements, as well as the story of Byron's throwing off the mask on the day of his marriage, to which allusion has already been made; we do not, however, mean to deny that such like acts of bitterness, or bad jokes practised against his wife, may with too much justice be laid to his charge.

We come, lastly, to one of the most important elements in all these proceedings—the interference of the public. If any relation in life should be excluded from publicity, undoubtedly marriage is that relation; certainly the public has neither the right to drag its concerns before its tribunal, nor does it possess the means to pass a fitting judgment upon them. Byron indeed, loving as he did to lay bare the secrets of his home and heart to the inspection of the world, had no right to be surprised, when his love affairs and his marriage became—at first, indeed, contrary to his intention—the subject of public discussion. Society treated him here as capriciously as his mother formerly had done; after first irrationally pampering and caressing him, with equal want of reason it overwhelmed him with insults and revilings; from the throne of glory upon which society had placed him, it dragged him down to place him in the pillory, and to brand him as a criminal. Byron had forfeited the good graces of orthodoxy, both religious and political; he had already inwardly broken with it, and

[1] The *Times*, September 3, 1869.

it couldnot be long ere the rupture should be manifested. He who maintained views so heretical, both in politics and religion, as Byron had professed in 'Childe Harold' and elsewhere, was readily credited with every offence. It must have been some great crime which drove his pious, patient, virtuous wife from him. The frenzy of public opinion against him seems alone explicable by the widely disseminated belief in the commission of incest. Orthodox society found a certain satisfaction in working itself up into a holy indignation; a battle *pro aris et focis* had to be fought against an outlaw. The world at the same time ceased to think and examine; whatever was asserted was taken up and repeated, and those who most loudly vociferated their accusations knew so little of the facts of the case, that they could not possibly form a true judgment of the guilt or innocence of the persons concerned. Above all, it would have been well, if Society had not forgotten, that they who dwell in glass houses should not be the first to throw stones. The upper classes were not a whit more pure than Byron; they were so far worse, that to their immorality they added hypocrisy. In the descending scale from those classes, moral corruption might perhaps decrease, but in the same ratio blind fanaticism increased and flourished. All classes, however, were on a par in this respect, that they all were seized with a burning fever of indignation against Byron; Byron became, in a word, the scape-goat which English society drives forth from time to time into the wilderness laden with the crimes and curses of the multitude.[1] His friend Shelley was another scape-goat of the same kind. When Byron appeared in the Upper House, no one greeted him but Lord Holland; even his acquaintances shunned him, so that after a few minutes he left the House, never to enter

[1] Disraeli in *Venetia*; Macaulay in his famous article.

it again. He did not venture to appear at parties or in the theatre: even in the streets he was insulted and hissed by the mob.[1]

Byron, though touched and wounded as he had never been before, did not, however, lose the elasticity of his spirit. But his position in society was completely undermined and destroyed, his pride profoundly mortified, and his heart assailed with the most conflicting feelings. Had the separation been his own work, he would doubtless have more easily accommodated himself to it; but that it should have been initiated by his wife, and that he should have been forced to accede to it, was a heavy blow to his self-love, which had grown accustomed to success. Yet there were hours when he felt drawn towards his wife, and when for her sake he would readily have sacrificed his pride. The two celebrated poems[2] 'Fare thee well,' and 'A Sketch,' enable us to look into the very depths of his shattered feelings. The latter, a more than bitter satire on the mischief-maker Mrs. Clermont, could not fail to add intensity to the general indignation against him; it was, in truth, an unworthy abuse of poetry, which here was perverted to the purposes of private revenge. On the famous 'Farewell' opinions were divided. Some pronounced it an outpouring of the deepest love, which no woman with a heart could resist; Madame de Staël, when she read it, is said to have uttered the saying which has become notorious: 'How gladly would I have been unhappy in Lady Byron's place.' Others, again, doubted the genuineness of the feelings expressed in it, and Moore[3] himself confesses that, at first, he could not altogether

[1] [This is positively denied by Hobhouse: 'Lord Byron was never hissed as he went to the House of Lords; nor insulted in the streets.'—*West Review*, January, 1825, p. 25.]

[2] They were written in March 1816.

[3] *Life of Byron*, iii. 230.

stifle his doubts; but when he afterwards read in Byron's 'Memoirs' the account of the origin of this poem, he changed his opinion, and was convinced of its truthfulness. 'He there described, and in a manner whose sincerity there was no doubting, the swell of tender recollections under the influence of which, as he sat one night musing in his study, these stanzas were produced—the tears, as he said, falling fast over the paper as he wrote them.'[1] The poem is evidently the product of impulse; Byron really felt at the time what he wrote, but what he then felt in the silent hours of that night, he did not continue to feel throughout life: his frame of mind, if real, was evanescent. But the transient feelings of that moment have been enshrined by the poet in a form which the world will not willingly let die: and the force of his genius is seen in giving such touching expression to the perennial sentiments of the human heart. Moore, who could not but disapprove of the publication of these two poems, exonerates Byron, so far, by explaining that their publication was a breach of confidence in a friend, to whom Byron had shown them. But then he should have publicly protested against their being given to the world; whereas, the manner in which the 'Poems on his Domestic Circumstances,' accompanied by a sketch of his life, were suppressed, is far from being satisfactory. The only apology that can be made for him, is, that at this crisis, he was stung to the quick. At a later period, however, it must be admitted, that he frequently made his domestic misery the topic of conversation, in an utterly unworthy manner and in violation of all good taste, for which he was once taken to task by Lady Blessington in some very telling verses.[2] Thus, too, he deliberately dated

[1] *Life of Byron*, iii. 20.

[2] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 46.

the dedication of the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' to Hobhouse on 'the anniversary of the most unfortunate day of my past existence.'

It was natural that Byron's long-cherished plans of travel should rapidly come to maturity after the separation. The ground was burning under his feet, and for the moment he cared less for the direction of his travels, than that they should commence at once. Yet the pre-eminent fascinations of Italy, which, perhaps, he regarded only as a station on the way to Greece, soon decided his choice. The last days spent in London were soothed by the presence of his sister. Of his friends, Hobhouse, Lord Holland, Scrope Davies, and Rogers remained true to him. Leigh Hunt also showed his sympathy, and was the only man of the press who took his part in the 'Examiner.'[1] Lady Jersey ventured, in defiance of public feeling, to make a party for him expressly, and another lady, Miss Mercer, afterwards Countess Flahaut, showed much cordial kindness to him at the same party, and defended him afterwards in a large company—a fact which Byron gratefully mentions.[2] Notwithstanding the satisfaction which these acts afforded, it cost him little pain to bid adieu to his native land, and deep bitterness was doubtless the feeling which accompanied him, as on April 25th he embarked for Ostend, and the coasts of England, which he was destined never to see again, disappeared from his gaze.

[1] [Distinctly denied by Hobhouse: 'The *Examiner* was not the only paper that defended Lord Byron. The *Morning Chronicle* was a zealous advocate of his lordship; and Mr. Perry, the editor, had a personal altercation with Sir R. Noel on the subject.'—*West. Review*, January, 1825, p. 26.]

[2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 232.

CHAPTER VII.

SWITZERLAND AND VENICE.

1816—1819.

Out of defiance, perhaps, to society which had outlawed him, and in spite of the pecuniary difficulties under the pressure of which he had so long groaned, Byron set out on his travels with a somewhat ostentatious display. He surrounded himself with a numerous retinue of servants —besides Fletcher and the page Rushton, he took into his service a Swiss of the name of Berger, and a young Italian physician called Dr. Polidori. His travelling arrangements were almost sybaritic: he had a large carriage built after the pattern of that used by Napoleon and captured at Genappe; in addition to a bed it contained a library, a plate-chest, and every apparatus for dining,[1] and was equally adapted for sleeping, studying, or dining. It was, however, not sufficiently capacious for his baggage and suite, and at Brussels he bought a *calèche* for his servants—a purchase which involved him in an unpleasant transaction with the person from whom he bought it.[2] Whence he derived the means to defray this expenditure, since but a short time previously he had been *vis-à-vis de rien*, is not so clearly to be ascertained; probably from his wife's fortune, if not

[1] See description of it in Moore's *Life*, iii. 243.

from his wife's parents. Byron, indeed, said, according to Medwin,[1] that he not only repaid the dowry of 10,000*l.* she had brought him at their marriage, but that he added the like sum from his own fortune. If, however, this is to be received as true, this reimbursement could not possibly have taken place before the year 1818, when Newstead was sold to Colonel Wildman. Byron had, according to Moore, formed, and repeatedly expressed the resolution—which, however, he did not keep—never to touch a farthing of his wife's fortune. Miss Martineau, lastly, alleges that the fortune of his wife furnished him with the means of pursuing his life abroad; that he spent every shilling of her fortune over which he could legally exercise any control, while he left to her nothing which he could legally withhold. It is much to be feared, that the last statement comes pretty near the truth. Byron's conduct in this as in other matters was a compound of the strangest contradictions. Although himself in distress and pursued by legal executions, we see him always ready generously to help others; he rejects the *honoraria* for his literary works, which he had gained in the most honourable way, and yet does not hesitate to apply to his own purposes a portion of the fortune of the wife who had separated from him. It is true that, according to English law and usage, the husband has absolute command over the property of his wife; yet surely now, if ever, pride, in the best sense, and the true feeling of honour, should have constrained him to restrict himself to his own resources. A legal arrangement with respect to his wife's property was at a later period, after the death of his mother-in-law, effected through confidential friends of both parties.

Like Scott and Southey, Byron first of all visited the field of Waterloo, and, like them, collected there many

[1] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 64.

weapons, which he consigned to the care of Mr. Murray, and afterwards presented to him. Considered in its geographical features, the plain of Waterloo appeared to his mind, as if it had been marked out for the scene of a great action. 'I have viewed with attention'—he goes on to say —'those of Platæa, Troy, Mantinea, Leuctra, Chæronea, and Marathon; and the field around Mont St. Jean and Hugomont appears to want but a better cause, and that undefinable but impressive halo which the lapse of ages throws around a celebrated spot, to vie in interest with any or all of these, except perhaps the last mentioned.[1] The stanzas relating to the battle in the third canto of 'Childe Harold' he wrote at Brussels; in directness of effect, in force, in elevation, they far surpass Scott's and Southey's descriptions of the same event, and are to this hour universally admired. Scott himself doubts whether they are surpassed in vigour and in feeling by any verses in the English language. Following, afterwards, the course of the Rhine, he entered into the heart of the loveliest scenery of Europe, and, as he pursued his journey, found his expectations exceeded. Passing through Basle, Berne, and Lausanne, he came to Geneva, where he took up his abode in the Hotel Secheron, situated outside the town, on the western shore of the lake. Here he became acquainted with Shelley, who along with his wife, then in her eighteenth year, and a lady, a relative of the latter, of the same age,[2] were residing there. Shelley

[1] Note on *Childe Harold*, iii. 30.

[2] This relative of Mrs. Shelley forced herself, according to the Countess Guiccioli, on Byron, who wished to have nothing to do with her. But the Countess here, as in many other respects, is only half informed; she does not appear to know that this relative (Miss Jane Clermont) was the mother of Byron's natural daughter Allegra. See *Athenæum*, May 22, 1869, p. 702. Miss Clermont afterwards accompanied the Shelleys to Italy.

had, indeed, some years previously sent his 'Queen Mab' to Byron; but the letter which Shelley wrote to accompany the volume having been lost, the two poets had up to this time never come in contact with each other. Notwithstanding this, spirits like theirs, so closely allied in many respects, quickly attracted each other, and an intimate friendship was soon formed between them, which was promoted by the love of sailing common to both. They forthwith procured a boat—the first with a keel on the Lake of Geneva—and every evening, accompanied by the ladies, sailed on the lake. What their feelings were, and how the incomparable scene sank into Byron's soul, cannot be more beautifully expressed than in the poet's own words:—

> Clear placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
> With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
> Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
> Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
> This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
> To waft me from distraction: once I loved
> Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
> Sounds sweet as if a sister's voice reproved,
> That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.[1]

When the Shelleys took a small villa on the eastern shore of the lake, Byron sailed every evening from Secheron across to them, and when with the approach of night he returned alone, he used to give vent to his feelings by singing. Byron afterwards left the Hotel Secheron, and went to reside at Villa Diodati,[2] also on the eastern shore of the lake, about ten minutes' walk distant from the villa of his friends. Their intercourse then became,

[1] *Childe Harold*, iii. 85. Compare the 'Sonnet to Lake Leman.' *Life and Works*, x. 293.

[2] This villa, now situated in the suburb Coligny, was built by the learned Genevese theologian, Jean Diodati (1576-1649), who here received a visit from Milton.

if possible, still warmer and more intimate; they prolonged their meetings often till the morning. During a week of rain, while they read together German ghost-stories in a French translation,[1] the thought occurred to them to attempt something in imitation of them. 'You and I,' said Byron to Mrs. Shelley, 'will publish ours together.'[2] Thus arose Mrs. Shelley's celebrated romance of 'Frankenstein.' Byron, in fulfilment of his part of the engagement, told the story of the 'Vampyre,' a mere sketch, which Dr. Polidori wrote down from memory, and afterwards completed and published as Byron's, and as his supposed work it excited, at the time, a very general interest, especially on the Continent.[3]

The only disturbing element in this circle was this same Polidori,[4] who, holding the position he did, could not very well be excluded from it. He was also the cause of unnecessary expense to Byron, and entailed on him continual annoyances by the utter want of tact in his conduct. In his ludicrous vanity and overweening pride, he wished to make himself the equal in all respects of Byron and Shelley. During their tour in the Rhineland he once said to Byron, 'After all, what is there you can do that I cannot do?' 'Why, since you force me to say,' answered the other, 'I think there are three things I can do which you cannot.' Polidori defied him to name them. 'I can,'

[1] *Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'histoires d'apparitions, de spectres, revenans, etc.* Traduit de l'Allemand par un Amateur. Paris, 1811 (?), Lenormant et Schoell, 2 tomes 12mo.

[2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 281.

[3] *The Vampyre*, a tale by the Right Hon. Lord Byron. Lond. 1819. The fragment written down by Byron himself is in the Appendix to Moore's *Life*, vi. 339. Compare Shelley's *Essays, Letters from Abroad*, &c., ii. 96 *et seqq.*

[4] The father of Polidori had been secretary to Alfieri, came afterwards to London, and translated some pieces from Milton. Hunt's *Lord* 188.

said Lord Byron, 'swim across that river; I can snuff out that candle with a pistol-shot at the distance of twenty paces; and I have written a poem, of which 14,000 copies were sold in one day.'[1] At Diodati, when he would fain have read aloud a tragedy which he had composed, to soften the infliction, Byron took upon himself the office of reader, and performed it with malicious irony, praising chiefly the most ludicrous passages, and assuring him, that, when he was on the Drury-Lane Committee, far inferior plays had been offered to them.[2] These unpleasant scenes increased in frequency as Polidori became jealous of Shelley's intimacy with Byron; until at last, in a fit of mortified vanity he challenged Shelley, at which Shelley only laughed. Byron, however, checked Polidori with these words: 'Recollect that though Shelley has some scruples about duelling, *I* have none, and shall be at all times ready to take his place.'[3] At last, when Polidori was excluded from the excursion shortly to be mentioned, which Byron made with Shelley, this state of discord became so intolerable, that Byron was obliged to dismiss him from his service. He admitted, however, that Polidori was not without talents and knowledge, that he was an honourable man, and gave him letters of recommendation. On leaving Byron he went to Milan, where, on a certain occasion, he caused a very unpleasant scene in the theatre, and was consequently arrested. Byron, fortunately happening to be present, became responsible for his appearance, and obtained his release; next day he was sent out of the country by the Austrian police. Some years afterwards, unable to obtain a suitable position, he committed suicide by poison.

The excursion (June 23 to July 1) to which allusion has just been made, Byron and Shelley made together in

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 280. [2] *Ibid.* 275. [3] *Ibid.* 280.

their boat. Their enjoyment of the incomparable beauties of Nature was intense, and they fondly lingered over the recollections of the great social and intellectual struggles which hardly any other region presents in equal fulness with the Lake of Geneva.[1] They experienced the last throes of the Rousseau fever which Germany and France had already shaken off. Rousseau, accompanied by his Theresa, Monsieur de Luc and his two sons, had formerly made the same voyage on that lake; one of these two sons went afterwards to England, and there read, in his ninetieth year, Byron's description of the lake in 'Childe Harold' and the 'Prisoner of Chillon.'[2] Like St. Preux and Madame Wolmar, the two friends were caught by a squall near Meillerie, and were for some time in considerable danger, till they were safely landed at St. Gingolph. Byron, throwing off his coat, had prepared to save himself by swimming, while Shelley, who could not swim, stoically sat still and awaited the worst. With 'Héloïse' in their hands, which till then was unknown to Shelley, they visited Meillerie and Clarens, Vevey and Chillon. Clarens especially profoundly moved them, Shelley, according to his own account, with difficulty refrained from tears; in the Bosquet-de-Julie, where St. Preux and Julia exchanged their first kiss, they walked through the vineyards in silence which Byron broke only once with the exclamation: 'Thank God! Polidori is not here.'[3] They plucked roses from the bushes they found

[1] Shelley's account of this sail round the lake is given in a letter appended to his *History of a Six Weeks Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, &c.* London, 1817. Reprinted in Shelley's *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, ii. 61–77.

[2] [This was Jean André de Luc, the celebrated geologist, born at Geneva, Feb. 8, 1727, and who died at Windsor, Nov. 8, 1817. Compare Byron's Journal, Moore's *Life*, iv. 3.]

[3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 284.

there, imagining them planted by Julia's own hand, and let the leaves float away on the breeze as greetings to their absent loved ones. With his love of associating everything as much as possible with himself, Byron could scarcely have forgotten, amid the contemplation of these scenes, that his mother had once compared him to Rousseau. Shelley's pantheism of love is distinctly to be traced in the following lines: 'The feeling with which all around Clarens and the opposite rocks of Meillerie, is invested, is of a still higher and more comprehensive order than the mere sympathy with individual passion; it is a sense of the existence of love in its most extended and sublime capacity, and of our own participation of its good and of its glory; it is the great principle of the universe, which is there more condensed, but not less manifested; and of which, though knowing ourselves apart, we lose our individuality and mingle in the beauty of the whole.'[1] At a small inn, in the village of Ouchy, where they were detained for two days (June 26–27) by rain, he wrote the 'Prisoner of Chillon,' and also announced to Murray[2] the completion of the third canto of 'Childe Harold:' in a subsequent letter to the same correspondent he says that 'the feelings with which most of it was written need not be envied me.'[3] At Lausanne he visited with poetic devotion the place where Gibbon, one of his favourite writers, completed the work of his life, the 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' In the deserted grounds of his house he broke off a sprig of Gibbon's acacia, and plucked some rose-leaves from his garden, which he sent to Murray.[4] When a young man Gibbon had once offered his heart and hand to the beautiful Mademoiselle Curchod, who afterwards became

[1] Note to *Childe Harold*, iii. 100.
[2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 247.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 252.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 246.

the wife of Necker and mother of Madame de Staël, who now was holding her court in Coppet, where once (1670–1672) the philosopher Bayle had lived as a private tutor. Thus were the intellectual labours and glory of the past linked with the present, and Byron paid his visits to Madame de Staël at Coppet with far different feelings from those with which he had met her in London society. He found that 'in her own house she was amiable; in any other person's you wished her gone and in her own again;'[1] and confesses that 'she had made Coppet as pleasant as society and talent can make any place on earth.'[2] At her house he became acquainted with Schlegel and Bonstetten.[3] Whatever judgment may be formed of Madame de Staël's life and character, it must at any rate be admitted, that she is one of the few women of truly great genius in the world of letters, and she and Byron are by no means the least important leaves in the laurel wreath of literary glory which encircles the Lake of Geneva.[4]

Madame de Staël sought an opportunity to speak to Byron on his matrimonial affairs, and with such effect that she induced him to attempt, through a friend, a reconciliation with Lady Byron, and thereby, if possible, with public opinion. 'It does not do to war with the world,' she said: 'the world is too strong for the individual.'[5] Probably in this she anticipated the secret wish of Byron. Galt at least maintains[6] that Byron prolonged his residence at Geneva, in order that, through the friends who visited him, a re-union with his wife might

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 286 (note). [2] *Ibid.* iii. 255.

[3] 'Schlegel is in high force, and Madame as brilliant as ever.'—*Ibid.* 280.

[4] It is remarkable that Byron seems never to have visited Ferney, or at least never mentions it.

[5] Moore's *Life*, iii. 286. [6] *Life of Byron*, p. 219.

be effected. Madame de Staël, according to Medwin,[1] even made attempts with Lady Byron herself—all, however, to no purpose. Immediately on learning the ill success of his endeavours, Byron wrote the 'Lines when he heard that Lady Byron was ill,' in which he passed upon her a correct, though somewhat severe judgment. He repeatedly addressed letters of a business nature to her from Italy, and sent through her presents and souvenirs for Ada; through Mrs. Leigh, she in return sent him accounts of Ada's health, and on one occasion a lock of Ada's hair. A note also which she wrote to him in the year 1820, in reference to his Memoirs, declining the perusal of them which had been offered to her, is preserved.[2] The other letters which he wrote, she appears, to his great vexation, never to have answered.

The season for travelling brought the usual locust-swarm of English tourists, whom Byron in his embittered mood evaded more systematically than ever; whenever, notwithstanding his precautions, he fell in with them, they became the objects of his sarcasm. At Clarens, 'the most anti-narcotic place in the world,' he saw a lady sleeping in her carriage, and at Chamouni, to which he had previously made an excursion, he heard another exclaim, 'Did you ever see anything more rural?'[3] The same season, however, brought some dear friends to him, among others, M. G. Lewis, Scrope Davies, and Hobhouse, with the latter of whom he made a tour, from the 17th to the 29th September, in the Bernese Oberland. Their route lay through Lausanne, Vevey,[4] Clarens, Chillon,

[1] *Conversations, &c.*, p. 274.

[2] See *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1869, p. 407 (note).

[3] Byron's 'Journal' in Moore's *Life*, iii. 257.

[4] In the church of St. Martin they visited the graves of their countrymen, the regicides Ludlow and Broughton, who died here in exile. Broughton—as his tombstone says—'dignatus fuit, sententiam regis

and Byron again found the whole country 'beautiful as a dream.' They then passed over the Dent de Jaman, and through the Simmenthal to Thun; by the Lake of Thun to the Jungfrau, Staubbach, the Wengern Alp, Grindelwald, Scheideck, Rosenlani, &c., and then by Bern, Friburg, Yverdun, and Aubonne back to Diodati. Albania and Greece, so much admired by Byron, were thrown into the shade by the sublimity, grandeur, and beauty of the aspects of nature in Switzerland, and compared with the Albanian robber-hordes the people appeared not less superior in his eyes. Every object that met his gaze was diametrically opposite to his recent life in London; to the suffocating air and flaming lustres of the London ball-rooms, succeeded the pure atmosphere and glow of the Alps; instead of boating on the muddy Thames, he sailed on the blue lakes of Switzerland. Every reader of 'Manfred' knows the magnificent, though often gloomy descriptions with which the Alpine world inspired him. The impressions, however, he received were not all of the sterner and more overwhelming aspects of Nature; he had an eye also for the more peaceful, cheerful side of life among the mountains, and yielded himself to it with a simplicity scarcely to be expected from him. The tinkling of the cowbell, the pipes of the herdsmen, gave him the most perfect and charming image of pastoral life; the dances of the peasants in the inn at Brienz delighted him—'the dancing much better than in England: the English can't waltz, never could, never will'[1]—and formed a strange contrast with the war dances of the Klepths on the shore of Utraikey. In the Simmenthal he met—so he himself

regum probari, quam ob causam expulsus patriâ suâ.' Ludlow's house bore the inscription: 'Omne solum forti patria.' One of his descendants, however, bought this stone (1821) and conveyed it to England.

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 261.

relates [1]—a boy and a kid following him like a dog; the kid could not get over the fence and bleated so piteously that Byron had to help it, but nearly overset both himself and the kid into the river.[2] On the Wengern Alp he snow-balled Hobhouse.

Notwithstanding all the beauties of Nature, Switzerland was not a soil suited to Byron's nature; least of all Geneva in its social and religious aspects. He saw there the traces of that spirit of intolerance, which had once given Servetus to the scaffold, and punished a husband because he had kissed his wife on Sunday; he felt how much the formal, methodistical character of Geneva resembled the moral aspects of England. The most incredible stories — as he told Medwin — were circulated regarding him; he was watched with a telescope from the other side of the Lake, and in Madame de Staël's house, Mrs. Hervey, an old lady of sixty-five years of age, the authoress of several romances, swooned away at his entrance into the room, as if 'his Satanic Majesty' had arrived.[3] Allowing for some exaggeration here, we yet discover a residuum of truth. The dark suspicion, undoubtedly, of the alleged crime for which his wife had separated from him, was here already an open secret; it was the consciousness of this which mainly induced Byron to seek a refuge elsewhere. He avoided therefore the Genevese as much as he did his own travelling countrymen, which naturally increased their vexation and aversion. Besides this, he was but imperfectly acquainted with the French language, and never throughout his life learned to speak it with facility. Enough: Byron struck his tent, and after a farewell dinner at Coppet (October 1), set out for Italy accompanied by Hobhouse. They passed over

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 261. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 261. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 150.

the Simplon, on which, to use Byron's words, 'God and man had done wonders,'[1] and by the Lago Maggiore to Milan. The Borromean Islands he thought too artificial.[2] Milan, where they resided fourteen days, reminded him of Seville, although he regarded Seville as the finer.[3] He of course admired the cathedral and the triumphal arch of Napoleon; visited the Brera, and made the acquaintance of the Italian poet Monti.[4] But above all, the social state of the people here and everywhere interested him. The correspondence of Lucretia Borgia with Cardinal Bembo, preserved in the Ambrosian Library, had especial charms for him; of these letters he earnestly desired to take copies, but permission was refused him. The most interesting of them he impressed, therefore, as far as he could, on his memory; and from the beautiful lock of Lucretia's golden hair, preserved in the Ambrosian Library, he abstracted one single hair as a relic.[5] He was evidently amused with the discovery, that a cardinal, so learned and pious too as Bembo, corresponded, 'in the prettiest love-letters in the world,' with the depraved Lucretia, the daughter of a Pope, and who was said to have lived in incest with her own brother! From Milan he passed on to Verona, where 'he found the amphitheatre wonderful —beating even Greece;'[6] he brought away some pieces of the granite tomb of Juliet and sent them to England for Ada and his nieces.[7] In the middle of November the travellers arrived in Venice.

No city could have harmonised better with Byron's peculiar character than Venice. It was the city of the sea, at all times his darling element; the canal, immediately before his house, conducted him at once into the

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 299.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* iii. 300.
[5] *Ibid.* iii 305. [6] *Ibid.* iii. 308. [7] *Ibid.*

Adriatic. Though till lately a Republic, it was a thoroughly aristocratic city, and amid all the freedom and ease of their social intercourse, the Venetians reverenced the old aristocratic names and the ruling caste. To Byron, who, spite of all his radicalism on paper, was a thorough aristocrat, and who valued his pedigree above every other consideration, no popular characteristic could be more welcome or agreeable. The associations of great historical events added their charm to all this, and magnificent palaces, witnesses of a time when the Republic ruled over three kingdoms, looked down on him. Venice, lastly, was the city where life, changing day into night, revelled without restraint in the pleasures of the senses; and the poet, with his hot blood, could not but feel himself at home in a city as hot-blooded as himself. Venice, he says, had always been the greenest isle of his imagination;[1] Shakespeare and Otway had made it a classical city to every Englishman.[2] To these two English poets, who had by their poems conferred celebrity on Venice, Byron must henceforth be added. In the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' in 'Marino Faliero,' in the 'Two Foscari,' in the 'Ode on Venice,' and in 'Beppo,' Venice is the grand theme of his poetry. Of the Venetian women he says in the last-named powerful description of Venice and its pleasures—

> They've pretty faces yet, those same Venetians,
> Black eyes, arch'd brows and sweet expressions still;
> Such as of old were copied from the Grecians,
> In ancient arts, by moderns mimick'd ill;
> And like so many Venuses of Titian's
> (The best 's at Florence—see it, if ye will)
> They look when leaning over the balcony,
> Or stepp'd from out a picture by Giorgione.[3]

When at last, disgusted with excesses, he came at

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 311. [2] *Ibid.* 314. [3] *Beppo*, stanza xi.

Ravenna to reflection, he declares that there were not ten righteous in Venice, calls it a 'scorpion-nest of vice,' and exclaims:

Gehenna of the waters! thou sea-Sodom.[1]

But for the present he thought of nothing but of rushing headlong into the riot of its sensuality. He took forthwith a gondola, hired a box in the Phœnix theatre, and lived with a mistress. The latter was Marianna Segati, the young wife of 'a merchant of Venice,' in whose house, in the very narrow street called Merceria, he had hired lodgings. He describes her as an antelope with large dark oriental eyes;[2] and so great were her fascinations that, when Hobhouse after a short stay continued his journey to Rome, Byron declined to accompany him as had been intended:[3] 'I should have gone too,' he writes, 'but I fell in love and must stay that over.' 'Love,' he says in another place,[4] 'in this part of the world is no sinecure;' and the claims which it made upon him were all the stronger as he was about to take part in the Carnival. In the depth of his soul, however, he brooded over unformed plans and great thoughts: 'If I live ten years longer,' so he writes to Moore February 1817, 'you will see that it is not over with me—I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing: and it may seem odd enough to say, I do not think it my vocation. But you will see that I shall do something or other—the times and fortune permitting—that, like the cosmogony or creation of the world, will puzzle the philosophers of all ages. But I doubt whether my constitution will hold out.'[5]

But so great was the elasticity of his mind, that in spite of dissipations which would have been enough to de-

[1] *Marino Faliero*, act v. sc. i.
[2] Moore's *Life*, iii. 311.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 326.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 330.
[5] *Ibid.* iii. 350.

stroy any ordinary man, he finished, during this winter, the tragedy of 'Manfred,' which he had begun in Switzerland. Thus side by side we find in him the depth of gloomy melancholy and the excess of levity. As if this were not sufficient, his mind demanded still further occupation; this he found in the society of the monks of St. Lazarus and in the study of the Armenian language, to which he devoted several hours daily. 'I found,' he writes to Moore, 'that my mind wanted something craggy to break upon; and this (the Armenian language), as the most difficult thing I could discover here for an amusement, I have chosen to torture me into attention.'[1] The monastery numbered within it nineteen monks, of whose life, piety, and learning Byron always spoke respectfully: 'their Bishop was a fine old fellow with the beard of a meteor.'[2] They zealously endeavoured to contribute to the education and culture of their countrymen, and in furtherance of this purpose had set up a printing press in the monastery. They were then busily engaged with the composition of an English-Armenian grammar, in which undertaking[3] Byron assisted them to the utmost of his power: he contributed 1,000 francs to defray the expenses of its publication. He also translated from the Ar-

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 312.

[2] *Ibid.* 330.

[3] Father Pasquale had earlier in his life spent two years in England; he died in 1854. In the *Athenæum* of May 16, 1868, p. 698, we are informed that some Italian journals have announced, that Byron's correspondence with the monks had recently been discovered in the monastery; but as the monks themselves told us, they possess nothing from Byron's hands but a few marginal notes in Aucher's Grammar of the English and Armenian languages, and his own signature in Armenian and English in the visitors' book. The fourth canto of *Childe Harold* has been translated into the Armenian language by one of the brethren: Venice, in the island of St. Lazarus, 1860. The English is on the left, the translation on the right page: some strong political expressions have been expunged.

menian an epistle of the Corinthians to the Apostle Paul, and the answer to it—neither of them genuine.

If the morning hours were devoted to the study of the Armenian language, the evening was given to exercise, an indispensable requisite to Byron. There being, in Venice, no professors of the noble art of boxing, he had his riding horses brought thither, possibly also to excite a sensation by the novelty of the sight. 'In Venice,' says Matthews, 'there are only eight horses: four are of brass and stand above the entrance to the Cathedral: the other four are alive and stand in Lord Byron's stable.'[1] This stable he had hired from the commandant of the Castello St. Andrea, on the Lido; thither he used to row in his gondola with the consul Hoppner, Hobhouse, Shelley or another companion, and then rode up and down between the two small forts that stand on the shore of the Lido. The only unpleasantness from which he suffered in these excursions, was that on landing from his gondola Byron used to be stared at by his travelling countrymen, who assembled for this purpose on the Lido, made enquiries about him from the gondoliers, and under the pretext of wishing to see the treasures of art, which did not exist, even forced their way with a wonderful pertinacity into his house. One of his companions describes these rides and the conversations which took place during them, as among his most precious recollections.[2] As for Byron, he was so delighted with the Lido, that he expressed to this companion the wish to be buried there, if he should die at Venice; but in no case would he admit that his body should be taken to England, or that his family should concern themselves about his burial.[3]

[1] Matthew's *Diary of an Invalid*, p. 623.

[2] See the account in Moore's *Life*, iv. 82–83.

[3] The Jewish burial ground was on the Lido; this the French in days for military reasons had levelled with the ground, and also by

The unhealthy exhalations from the stagnant waters, partly too his dissipations—his nights spent mostly at the theatre and at masked balls—proved so prejudicial to Byron's health, already shattered by his perverse diet, that at the beginning of February 1817 he was attacked by a low fever, which for nearly two months he could not shake off, especially as he rejected all medical aid. When his own health returned, the fever had become epidemic and carried off so many persons, that his servants urged him to leave Venice; Marianna Segati also was a sufferer from the same disease. Under these circumstances Byron at last summoned up courage to tear himself from her for some time, and to take a tour to Rome. Marianna, though a mother, desired to accompany him; to this, however, Byron would not consent. In the journey, which lasted from the middle of April to the end of May, he passed through Ferrara, Florence, and Foligno. In Ferrara he saw the court in which, according to Gibbon's narrative, Parisina and Hugo were beheaded, and the prison of Tasso, which suggested the idea of his poem 'The Lament of Tasso,' which he despatched, ready for the press, from Florence to his publisher Murray. In Florence, although he spent only one day there, he was 'drunk with beauty.' The Venus, the bust of Antinous, Santa Croce, the Westminster Abbey of Italy, were the especial objects of his admiration. In Rome itself he found to his satisfaction few of his countrymen, though he was charmed to meet there again Hobhouse and Lord Lansdowne. The former soon afterwards continued his

way of distinction the graves of two or three Protestants (!). The Protestant and Catholic burying places are close to each other on the island S. Michele. Byron, however, desired to be buried outside the churchyard; and for an epitaph—as he said in one of his later letters—nothing but his name and the words: 'Implora pace,' which he had seen on a tombstone at Ferrara, and which profoundly impressed him.

travels to Naples, and Byron, could he have severed himself for a longer period from Marianna, would gladly have accompanied him, although he justified on other grounds also his declining to go to Naples: it was, he said,[1] only second among the beautiful sea views of Europe; Constantinople and Lisbon, the first and third, he had already seen. So it was that he never visited Naples, which with its environs—Vesuvius, Herculaneum, Pompeii, the Bay of Baiæ, &c.—would surely have furnished him with materials for a noble episode of 'Childe Harold.' That he saw all the wonders and sights of Rome, from the Pope and the funeral of a cardinal down to the execution of three robbers, from St. Peter's and the Colosseum down to the Teutonic artists, who wore their hair *à la Raphael*, need not be mentioned at greater length. Having brought his horses from Venice, he made all his excursions to places of interest, both without and within the city on horseback; his lameness made this the pleasantest mode of progression, and it was preferable to driving as affording him more bodily exercise. How Rome moved and fascinated him is seen in the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' written on the very spot. Here his poetry winged its highest flight; his spirit hovered like an eagle over the ruins, and bore aloft to the throne of the Eternal not his griefs alone but those of the world. 'The voice of Marius,' says Scott, 'could not sound more deep and solemn among the ruined arches of Carthage, than the strains of the pilgrim amid the broken shrines and fallen statues of her subduer.'

At Rome Byron sat to Thorwaldsen for his bust. The commonly received story is, that without any previous announcement, he surprised the great sculptor in his

[1] Letter to Moore, *Life*, iv. 5.

studio and requested him forthwith to take his likeness. The fact, however, is, that Hobhouse, commissioned by Byron, had written to Thorwaldsen, asking him whether and when Byron could sit to him. Thorwaldsen, who was a very bad and very indolent letter-writer, probably delayed his answer, and Byron, without waiting for it, went to him. 'Byron placed himself opposite me'—so Thorwaldsen told the story to Andersen—'but at once began to put on a quite different expression from that usual to him. "Will you not sit still?" said I—"you need not assume that look." "That is my expression," said Byron. "Indeed?" said I, and I then represented him as I wished. When the bust was finished, it was universally admitted to be an excellent likeness. Byron when he saw the bust, said: "It is not at all like me; my expression is more unhappy." He intensely desired to be so exceedingly miserable,' added Thorwaldsen with a humorous expression.[1] The bust, the first copy of which was sent, according to agreement, to Hobhouse, was repeatedly executed in marble, and a great number of plaster casts were sent to England. A *replica* in marble was ordered from America in these terms: 'Place the names of Byron and Thorwaldsen on it, and it will become an immortal monument.' When the sculptor at a later period heard of the part which Byron was taking in the liberation of Greece, impelled by his own feelings he executed the bust again in a very fine block of Greek marble.[2]

It had been Byron's intention not to leave Rome

[1] This agrees also with the remarks of the American painter West, who at a later period painted Byron's portrait at Leghorn. 'When he was silent, he was a better sitter than before; for he assumed a countenance that did not belong to him, as though he were thinking of a frontispiece for "Childe Harold."'—Moore's *Life*, v. 344.

[2] See Thorwaldsen's *Life*, by Just Mathias Thiele, translated into German, with the author's co-operation, by Henrik Helms, i. 200 *et seq.*

until June—but his eagerness to return was so great, that he arrived in Venice at the end of May. According to his expressed wish, Marianna travelled a part of the way to meet him. He established himself with her in a country-house, at La Mira on the Brenta, close to the city, to which he made repeated visits as business or pleasure summoned him, especially when Lewis from Switzerland, and Hobhouse from Naples, came there. Shelley also arrived in August at Venice to transact some matters of business with Byron, probably with reference to his daughter Allegra.

As might have been foreseen, the more passionate the *liaison* with Marianna at the first, the sooner did he become weary of it. He conceived, as it appears, a distrust, that she was actuated more by self-interest than by love.[1] Besides, he began to find his lodging inconvenient and unsuited to his rank and position; he accordingly negotiated for a more aristocratic abode, and the Countess Mocenigo let to him one of her three Palazzi on the Grand Canal for the rent of 200 louis d'or. There in the course of the summer he established himself, with his domestic menagerie—for he had by no means lost this fancy—still however retaining possession of the house at La Mira; and thus began the second stage, so to speak, of his residence in Venice.

During this period he secluded himself entirely from good society, and his lordly palace with his plebeian associates formed one of those strange contrasts with which his life abounds. In his first winter at Venice he lived in the circle of the Countess Albrizzi, who then stood at the head of the most fashionable as well as of the most cultivated society. Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi (1770–1836),

[1] See Moore's *Life*, iv. 107.

daughter of Count Teotochi, and born at Corfu, was regarded by her admirers with some exaggeration as the De Staël of Venice, even of Italy:[1] she not only took the liveliest interest in all the productions of literature and art, but gained some literary reputation by her own writings. In her 'Portraits of Celebrated Men' she introduced one of Byron, written in no unfriendly spirit and displaying a refined faculty of observation. The original draft, however, he declined to revise, telling her rather abruptly that, considering the shortness of their acquaintance, she was incapable of truly characterising him, and that he would be much obliged to her to throw the manuscript into the fire. This harshness was the more unjustifiable, as Byron had every reason to be satisfied with the estimation in which he was held as a poet in Venice. On his arrival he had found a beautifully printed edition of his 'Prisoner of Chillon,' which astonished him by its freedom from errata. At a later period the Venetian journals published translations of the reviews of 'Glenarvon' and 'Childe Harold,' which appeared in the 'Jena Literary Gazette.' That the learning of the Albrizzi salon was not of the profoundest character cannot surprise us. A characteristic anecdote illustrative of this superficiality is related in Moore's 'Life.' While engaged in writing the letterpress descriptions of Canova's works, the Countess, making diligent enquiries about the character of Washington, of whom Canova had made the celebrated statue which stands before the Capitol at Washington, was one evening informed by a gentleman present—author of a book on geography and statistics—among sundry other details, that Washington was shot in a duel by Burke! Byron, who had been impatiently biting his lips during the

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 213.

conversation, exclaimed, 'What, in the name
you thinking of?' and corrected the learned
had confounded Washington with Hamilton
with Colonel Burr. Such superficial learnin
be agreeable to Byron, although afterwards i
of the Countess Guiccioli he learned to tole
ungraciously. He found, however, in this a
withdraw from the Albrizzi salon and to joi
time the less learned circle of the Countess B
divided with the former the empire of the fashio
But as Byron gave himself up to dissipation a
course with the lower orders he withdrew
from this coterie. A charming Fornarina in
'fazziolo,' especially if she knew how to handl
had, for a time at least, greater attractions fo
the most refined lady of the aristocratic families
advantage he derived from this intercourse wit
orders was the knowledge he gained thereby o
the people, of the Italian language generally,
Venetian dialect specially, in his intimate a
with which he always took pride. According
confession, indeed, he spoke Italian more fl
correctly. Margarita Cogni now took the
Marianna Segati as the queen of his hare
intimacy with both by no means excluded othe
Numerous passages of his letters relating to th
Moore has omitted and was obliged to omit,
much still remains. Enough: Byron was a *por*
Domini Joannis, and Fletcher, though he ha
home who had not separated from him, worth
him as his Leporello. Margarita, like Mar
married; but she left her husband (a baker), an
without force, quartered herself in Byron's hous
sided over his household as 'donna di governo,'

with such economy that the expenses were reduced almost one-half. That she could neither read nor write was so far not displeasing to Byron, as she thus could not torment him with letters, nor ransack his correspondence. She was twenty-two years old, tall and handsome, and possessed the humour peculiar to the Venetian people; she was at the same time extremely capricious, jealous, and overbearing, and yet combined all these qualities with great devoutness. Byron himself describes her as a tigress, a Medea. She caused frequent scenes in his house, and sometimes when it became too much for Byron he left the house and spent the greater part of the night in his gondola on the water. One day when he was angry with her and applied to her the epithet 'Vacca'—a sad affront—with great presence of mind, and not without a touch of Italian grace, she courtesied and replied, 'Vacca tua, Eccelenza.' In return she used sometimes to rail at him as 'Gran cane della Madonna.' Byron was at last obliged to part with her: she refused to quit the house, threatened knives and revenge, and at last when Byron ordered his gondolier to take her home she threw herself into the canal, from which, however, she was dragged out in safety.[1] Byron had to exert all his energy to get rid of her.

To aggravate the miseries of his domestic condition, his natural daughter Allegra, born in Switzerland in February 1807, was sent to Byron in the course of this summer. A young, utterly inexperienced, Swiss nurse had charge of her, but with the exception of this person there was no one in his house—Byron's household consisting of men-servants only, one half English, the other half Italian—to nurse and watch over the little girl, then only eighteen

[1] See Byron's account of the scene. Moore's *Life*, iv. 119.

months old. Byron rejoiced, that she resembled him both in appearance and character, and was extremely anxious for her welfare. Notwithstanding his care, she must, amid such surroundings, have been ruined in mind, and even in body, had not the wife of the excellent Consul Hoppner interested herself in her, who entrusted her to the care of a worthy woman and watched over her education. A rich English widow without children, who saw Allegra in Hoppner's house, proposed to adopt her, provided Byron would entirely renounce her; to this proposal, however, he would not assent. On the contrary he afterwards took her with him to Ravenna, where the Countess Guiccioli to a certain extent took her under her own care. She was left, however, far too much to the servants and to herself. In a letter to Hoppner,[1] Byron thus describes her: 'Allegra is prettier, I think, but as obstinate as a mule, and as ravenous as a vulture; health good, to judge of the complexion—temper tolerable, but for vanity and pertinacity. She thinks herself handsome and will do as she pleases.' She was, then, the ravenousness excepted, the very image of her father. At four years of age, Allegra had grown to be, under these circumstances, completely mistress of the servants, and Byron saw that such a state of things must not continue, and especially that her instruction should be duly attended to. He sent her, therefore, to the convent of Bagna Cavallo, a short distance from Ravenna, where, as he insisted, care should be taken specially of her moral and religious education. He would not have her innoculated with any free-thinking views, and objected therefore to her being a member of Shelley's household; he intended, on the contrary, to have her brought up in the Catholic faith, which he declared to be the best religion; at any rate, certainly the oldest among the

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 290.

different branches of Christianity.[1] He was not, however, altogether uninfluenced in his plans for her by worldly motives. 'I by no means intended, nor intend'—he writes to Hoppner,[2] 'to give a *natural* child an *English* education, because, with the disadvantages of her birth, her after settlement would be doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of five or six thousand pounds, she might and may marry very respectably.' The placing her in the convent, however, was only provisional, and at Hoppner's suggestion he thought of sending her back to a good institution in Switzerland.[3] In accordance with these views the codicil is drawn up, which he added to his will immediately after the child was sent to him. He bequeathed to 'Allegra Biron, an infant, of about twenty months old, by him brought up, and now residing in Venice,' the sum of 5,000*l.*, which was to be paid to her either on her marriage, or on her attaining the age of twenty-one years (according as the one or the other should happen first); adding, however, the clause, provided she should not marry with a native of Great Britain.

All these dispositions were however fruitless, for Allegra died of fever April 20, 1822, at Bagna Cavallo—it may be almost said for her happiness; Byron was at the time in Pisa. The news of her death, conveyed to him by the Countess Guiccioli, affected him so deeply that she feared for his reason. He sank into a seat, and sat motionless, not shedding a single tear: even the Countess was obliged to leave him alone. Next day he was more composed: 'She is more fortunate than we are'—he said: 'besides, her position in the world would scarcely have allowed her to be happy. It is God's will—let us mention it no more.'[4] The body was embalmed and sent—the heart

[1] Letter to Mr. Hoppner. Moore's *Life*, v. 142.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* v. 174. [4] *Ibid.* v. 363.

and intestines separate—from Leghorn to England, in the same manner as the body of Lord Guilford had been brought to England by Polidori, a process which at the time excited Byron's ridicule. The same course was observed in the case of the corpse of the poet himself. He tells Murray,[1] as the reason for his desire that Allegra should be buried in England, that Protestants were not buried in consecrated ground in Catholic countries. He saw, however, no offensive obstruction in this with respect to himself, either when he wished to be buried on the Lido, or in former days by the side of his dog in the garden of Newstead. Or are we to regard this act as a mark of tenderness to Allegra's mother, that she might be enabled to visit the grave of her child? Certainly not; to the mother he felt perfectly indifferent, nor is mention[2] ever made of her except once, when Byron says that he had received [1820] a letter from her.[3] Enough: Allegra was to be buried at Harrow, where Byron as a boy had sat under an elm, and where he himself once wished to find his last resting place. He fixed on the exact spot where the coffin should be deposited in all privacy (his old friend Drury was to read the service), and he directed a marble tablet to be placed on the wall with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF

ALLEGRA,

DAUGHTER OF G. G. LORD BYRON,

WHO DIED AT BAGNA CAVALLO, IN ITALY,

APRIL 20, 1822,

AGED FIVE YEARS AND THREE MONTHS.

'I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.'—2 Samuel xii. 23.[4]

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[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 328.

[2] [It does not seem to have occurred to our author that Byron's reticence with regard to Allegra's mother may have proceeded not from indifference but from respect to that lady—and because she was a lady.]

[3] In a letter to Mr. Murray. Moore's *Life*, iv. 312. [4] *Ibid.* v. 335.

After this digression, which has anticipated the course of events, we return to the Palazzo Mocenigo. It is easy to be understood why Byron's friends disapproved and lamented a life so unworthy of him, and whence arose their desire to induce him to return to England. In Byron's own words: 'Hobhouse's wish is, if possible, to force me back to England;' and Moore cannot suppress a sigh, that his friendly endeavours were unsuccessful.[1] The troublesome business connected with the conveyance of Newstead, which, as has been already mentioned, was sold in November 1817, for 94,500*l.*, and which would have made Byron's presence desirable, furnished the chief pretext for these efforts. When, however, he was not to be moved to do this, it was proposed that a clerk of Hanson's should bring the documents to be executed by him to Geneva, where Byron was to meet him. Even this he refused as a kind of affront, although he was in considerable embarrassment for money, and the conclusion of the business was a matter of moment to him. He requested that the papers might be brought to Venice.[2] How the matter was ultimately arranged we are ignorant.

While Byron was confirmed rather by this abortive attempt, in his obstinate refusal to return home, a deliverance from his unhappy position at Venice came to him unexpectedly from a very different quarter—from his acquaintance with the Countess Guiccioli. This lady was the daughter of Count Gamba, a Ravennese nobleman with a large family and a small fortune. Educated in a convent, she was married before she was sixteen years old[3] to Count Guiccioli, a widower of sixty years of age, for whom she had no affection, who had been

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 123.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 123 *et seq.*

[3] ['She was in her twentieth year.'—Hobhouse in the *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1825, p. 22.]

already twice married and was one of the richest proprietors of the Romagna. Soon after her marriage, in the autumn of 1818, she met Byron for the first time at the house of the Countess Albrizzi, though no formal introduction then took place. No acquaintance ensued between them till the beginning of April of the following year, when they were introduced to each other at an evening party of the Countess Benzoni's, and not according to any wish expressed by either of the two, but merely through an act of courtesy on the part of the noble hostess. Each made so deep an impression on the other, that from that evening till the departure of the Countess Guiccioli from Venice they saw each other daily. She herself relates that 'his noble and wonderfully beautiful countenance, the tone of his voice, his manner, the thousand enchantments that surrounded him, rendered him so different and so superior a being to any whom I had hitherto seen, that it was impossible he should not have left the most profound impression upon me.'[1] The charm of her youth and her girlish freshness exceedingly attracted Byron; she was rather short than tall, and inclined to fulness, her bust was exceedingly beautiful, and her long golden locks and blue eyes imparted to her an especial charm very unusual in an Italian. It was to her also the glow and devotion of first love, for Byron was her first love, and we may add, notwithstanding her second marriage, her only love. To return this feeling fully and purely was no longer in Byron's power, although his affection for her was deeper and nobler than any of his previous attachments.

In the middle of April Theresa was obliged to return with her husband to Ravenna. The leave-taking affected her so powerfully, that during the first day's journey

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 146.

she was thrice seized with fainting fits, and became so dangerously ill, that she was brought home half-dead. Her distressing agitation was further increased by the death of her mother in giving birth to her fourteenth child. In the course of her home-journey she wrote letters to Byron full of the most ardent affection, nor could she now be calmed and restored to health until Byron promised, that he would soon visit her in Ravenna. So ardent was her affection, and so deep a change did it produce on her character, that she, who a few months before had surrendered herself to all the enjoyments of society and the world so novel to her, now wrote to her lover, protesting that, according to his wish, she would avoid all general society, and devote herself to reading, music, domestic occupations, riding on horseback—to everything, in short, she knew would be most pleasing to him. Dante's grave and the famous pine-forest furnished a sufficient pretext for an invitation to visit the secluded Ravenna. Theresa's relatives having been sufficiently prepared for his arrival, Byron started on the 2nd of June from La Mira on his journey to Romagna, visiting on the road the noted spots of Ferrara and Bologna. At the latter place he remained till the 8th, undecided whether he should go on to Ravenna or return to Venice, having received no news from Theresa, who had again fallen ill. At length, continuing his journey, he found her, on his arrival at Ravenna, in a deplorable condition; confined to her room by intermittent fever, and what seemed a consumptive cough, accompanied with spitting of blood, and her physicians almost despairing of her recovery. To tend, therefore, on the fair invalid became Byron's first concern; at his representation a distinguished Venetian physician, Professor Aglietti, was consulted, whose treatment combined with Byron's presence acted so beneficially on the patient,

that she gradually recovered. Count Guiccioli, of whose jealousy Byron's friends were somewhat apprehensive, appeared quite agreeable to this intimacy with his wife, and displayed every possible honour and attention to his guest. Almost daily he took him to drive in his carriage drawn by six horses. Byron meantime caused his riding-horses to be brought from Venice, and indulged in romantic rides in the Pineta. Here he passed daily by Dante's tomb; here it was that Boccaccio in the 'Decameron' makes the spectral knight pursue his mistress to death; here was the scene of Dryden's tale of 'Honoria.' Like these heroes of Parnassus, Byron has linked his name for ever with the Pineta. The stanzas referring to this famous forest in 'Don Juan'[1] are among the most charming passages of the whole poem.

Sweet hour of twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adriatic wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Cæsarian fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee?

The shrill cicalas, people of the pine,
Making their summer lives one ceaseless song,
Were the sole echoes, save my steed's and mine,
And vesper bell's that rose the boughs along;
The spectre huntsman of Onesti's line,
His helldogs, and their chase, and the fair throng
Which learned from this example not to fly
From a true lover,—shadowed my mind's eye.

But an existence so still and monotonous became intolerable to the passionate poet, and his life was in striking contrast with the tender devotion to nature which breathes in these lines. As once before to Lady Caroline

[1] iii. 105.

Lamb, so now he proposed to the fair object of his love, scarcely recovered from her illness, to fly with him.[1] According to the Italian code of morals, Theresa would by an elopement have utterly ruined herself in the eyes of society, while the *cicisbeat*, as a sanctioned custom, excited no offence. She, therefore, refused her assent to this plan, but outbid it by another yet more extravagant! she would, like Juliet, feign herself dead, in order to effect a perfect union with her lover. Happily for both, this scheme, the offspring of a high-flown fancy, was not attempted. Returning to the world of prose and reality, she accompanied her husband to Bologna, whither Byron in a few days after was to follow them. From thence, accompanied by his wife, the Count visited his estates in the neighbourhood, while Byron remained alone behind. During these days he gave himself up to a gloomy, almost despairing, frame of mind. Daily he repaired at the wonted hour to the house of the Guicciolis, and causing the deserted apartments of his mistress to be opened, he read and wrote in her books. He visited the Campo Santo, and carried on with 'his old friend, the Sexton,' a conversation about skulls,[2] which almost rivals the famous scene in Hamlet. His nervous excitability was raised to such a degree, that at the performance of Alfieri's 'Myrrha,' just as in earlier days at Massinger's 'New Way to Pay Old Debts,' he was so violently affected, that he was forced to leave the theatre in tears.[3] Even Allegra, for whom he sent to amuse and occupy him, failed to cheer him; in short, he was a burden to himself and to others, till his mistress came back. In the beginning of September Count Guiccioli, obliged to return to Ravenna, left his wife behind at Bologna, in Byron's society; he even tolerated their intimacy so far as to

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 175. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 197. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 180.

allow the Contessa to follow her lover to La Mira, where they spent the autumn under the same roof, which gave a shock even to Italian morality. Her uncertain health, which required country air, and the proximity to a Venetian physician, served as the pretext.

Those autumn days were made still brighter to Byron by the arrival (Oct. 8) of Moore at La Mira, who was forthwith accompanied by his friend to Venice, and became the occupant of Byron's own rooms in the Palazzo Mocenigo. Byron's delight at this meeting was intense and sincere. Although obliged to return every evening to La Mira, every morning he came in to Venice, and joined Moore in visiting its wonders, and afterwards they dined together. The day before Moore's departure Byron received from his fair friend 'leave to make a night of it.'[1] During the whole visit Byron was extraordinarily cheerful and in the highest spirits. Their talk turned chiefly on London life. Their jokes and laughter were incessant, and once when Moore began to speak of the rosy hue of the twilight, Byron, clapping his hand on his mouth, said with a laugh: 'Come, d—n it, Tom, don't be poetical.'[2] Another time, when they were standing together on the balcony, two Englishmen passed by in their gondola: 'Ah, if you John Bulls,' said Byron, putting his arms akimbo with a sort of comic swagger, 'knew who the two fellows are now standing up here, I think you *would* stare!'[3] On his return Moore stopped at La Mira, where he took a farewell dinner with Byron and the Countess; and the two friends parted never to see each other again. Byron's proposal that they should make a tour together to Arqua to see Petrarch's grave, Moore reluctantly declined, feeling himself bound to his travel-

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 236. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 209. [3] *Ibid.*

ling companion, Lord John Russell, from whom he had parted for a few days only.

It was at La Mira, shortly before taking leave, that Byron gave the MS. of his Memoirs to Moore, by whom the mode and manner of the gift has been thus graphically described. 'Look here,' he said holding up the white leather bag in which the manuscript was contained, 'this would be worth something to Murray, though you, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it.' 'What is it?' I asked. 'My life and adventures,' he answered. . . . 'It is not a thing,' he continued, 'that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it if you like—there, do whatever you please with it.' In taking the bag and thanking him most warmly, I added, 'This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth century with it.' He then added, 'You may show it to any of our friends you think worthy of it.'[1] From Ravenna Byron sent to him (Dec. 1820) an addition of 'eighteen more sheets of Memoranda.'[2] When Moore fell into pecuniary difficulties, an arrangement was made at Byron's suggestion, according to which Murray bought (Nov. 1821) from Moore these Memoirs for the sum of 2,000*l.*, binding himself, however, not to publish them until Byron's death, the right of repurchase up to that contingency being reserved by Moore. The condition imposed by Byron that the Memoranda should not be published during his life was not made altogether out of regard to the living, but was grounded also on personal considerations; Byron felt and said, that a writer is as good as dead after the publication of his Memoirs, and should not therefore in this way put an end to his literary life. He was not, however, regardless of Lady Byron's

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 242. [2] *Ibid.* v. 35, 36.

position. In a letter to Moore dated Jan. 2, 1820, he says: 'My this present writing is to direct you, that, if *she chooses*, she may see the MS. Memoir in your possession. I wish her to have fair play, in all cases, even though it will not be published till after my decease. For this purpose, it were but just that Lady Byron should know what there is said of her and hers, that she may have full power to remark on or respond to any part or parts, as may seem fitting to herself. This is fair dealing, I presume, in all events.'[1] The offer, when made, she wrote to decline.[2]

Moore's conduct, therefore, in consenting to their destruction[3] after Byron's death is the more indefensible. He could not, indeed, have prevented it, for the MS. had then become the absolute property of Mr. Murray. The *honorarium*, which had been advanced, Moore repaid, but was compensated for the sacrifice by the commission to edit the 'Life and Correspondence of Byron.' In this affair the character of Lady Byron appears in the most unfavourable and unworthy light; for if she did not instigate, she certainly encouraged, the destruction of the Memoirs, thus cutting off from her husband in the grave his chosen means of defence against the many calumnies heaped on his name on account of the separation, notwithstanding that the last word had by him been generously secured to herself.

The immorality, which, as a matter of course, was presupposed to exist in the Memoirs, served as one pretext for their destruction. But this pretext rests on no firm basis. Byron himself says (as reported by Medwin)[4] that there were few parts that may not, and none that

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 272.

[2] [The original letter was published in the *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1869, p. 407 (note).]

[3] See Appendix (E).

[4] *Conversations*, p. 42.

will not, be read by women. The manuscript was, moreover, with Byron's permission, lent to different persons, even to some ladies, for their perusal; and no one has ever confirmed the reproach of immorality which has been raised against them. On the contrary, Lady Burghersh, the wife of the English ambassador at Florence, assured the Countess Guiccioli [1] that she found the Memoirs, which Moore had lent to her at Florence, so unobjectionable that she would have allowed her daughter of fifteen years of age to read them.

Hunt doubts [2] the complete destruction of the Memoirs, and believes that they will one day see the light. This, however, does not seem probable, though some journals affect to know that a copy will be found among the papers left by Hobhouse,[3] which are not to appear till the end of the century. Then, too, Byron's letters to Hobhouse, which are wanting in Moore's 'Life,' will come to light; for the correspondence published therein consists almost entirely of letters addressed to himself and Murray. Byron's literary fame will, perhaps, be scarcely enhanced by their publication, but, as materials for the judgment of his character and for the history of his marriage, they must be most important documents. He repeatedly avers that he had aimed only at the truth: 'I only know'—he writes to Moore—'that I wrote it (the Memoir) with the fullest intention to be "faithful and true" in my narrative, but not *impartial*—no, by the Lord! I can't pretend to be that while I feel.'[4] To Murray he says: 'The Life is Memoranda, and not Confessions. I have left out all my loves (except in a general way) and many other of

[1] *Recollections of Lord Byron*, ii. 255, English translation.

[2] *Life of Byron*, i. 176.

[3] [I do not believe that Hobhouse ever saw the Memoirs, much less read them.—J. M.]

[4] Moore's *Life*, iv. 251.

the most important things (because I m
promise other people), so that 'tis like the pl
—"the part of Hamlet being omitted by part
But you will find many opinions and som
detailed account of my marriage and its co
true as a party concerned can make such a
suppose we are all prejudiced.'[1]

Soon after Moore's departure, Byron, hav
through during a ride in a storm, had an at
He passed the night in a high state of feve
the Countess and Fletcher sitting on eacl
bed: to the latter he dictated, in his deliri
of verses, which, to the astonishment of the C
quite correct and rational.[2] As usual, he
nothing to do with physicians or physic, an
self, as he reports triumphantly to Englar
water, and Allegra, who also was sufferin
with bark.[3] His relations with the Guiccioli
him, however, still greater distress than
Count Guiccioli, through his wife, propos
from Lord Byron a thousand pounds, for v
should be given and the usual rate of i
Although Moore, who was then present, and
advised him to accede to this proposal, he g
refusal; and the Countess, who utterly d
her husband's request, was strengthened in
nation to return to him. The Count, howe
person—just when Byron was struck down wi
to take her away. Byron refrained from any
so that the decision was left solely with
In the event of the husband and wife refusing
ciled, Byron would have felt himself bound i

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 251. [2] *Ibid.* 257. [3] *Ibid.* 261.

to leave her in her distress, especially as she was his equal in birth and rank: he would then, along with her, leave the country. He dreamt of a retired life in a province of France under an assumed name, but more still of emigrating to South America, and began to depict to himself the planter's life in the liveliest colours. In his dreams, the life of the American planter seemed but another variety of the condition of a Turkish Pacha. Contrary to all expectation, however, the union between the Count and Countess was brought about under the condition, that all connection between the lovers should cease, and Theresa, accordingly, about the middle of November followed her husband to Ravenna; while Byron, very much out of humour with everybody and everything, returned to Venice. His vanity was, perhaps, still more wounded than his love. Italy now became distasteful to him, and he wished to remove as far as possible from Theresa, in order to make another meeting impossible. He made, therefore, serious preparations for a return to England, his own ill-health and that of Allegra alone retarding his departure; but while engaged in packing up, letters between the lovers were again interchanged—the promise that all connection should cease entirely, as might easily have been foreseen, could not be observed. A prey to contradictory feelings and vehement excitement, the poor lady, immediately after her arrival at Ravenna, had again become dangerously ill. Her relatives, even her father, who had hitherto disapproved of her connection with Byron, could not deceive themselves as to the cause and only remedy of her distressing state, and, with the express approval of Count Guiccioli, Count Gamba, her own father, invited Byron to return as soon as possible to Ravenna. Of the letters exchanged between the two

lovers, Moore communicates only two extracts;[1] the only portions, as yet published, of their correspondence. Though full of expressions of love and tenderness, his letters—written in Italian, did not conceal the serious difficulties which were connected with their meeting again; more serious far, for her, than for himself. Like Hercules, but without a particle of the strength of Hercules, Byron stood at the cross-road, 'balancing between duty and inclination.' He had already announced to his friends in England, and especially to his sister, the intention of returning immediately, and had even begged Murray to address his next letter to Calais. The very day and hour of departure were fixed on. A lady, a friend of Theresa, gives, as an eye-witness, the following description of his state of irresolution:—'He was ready dressed for the journey, his gloves and cap on and even his little cane in his hand. Nothing was now waited for but his coming down stairs—his boxes being already on board the gondola. At this moment my Lord, by way of pretext, declared that if it should strike one o'clock before everything was in order (his arms being the only things not quite ready), he would not go that day. The hour strikes, and he remains!'[2] His decision, so far as it may be called such, was the result not so much of will as, on the contrary, of the absence of will and strength: he could not tear himself from her, though he did not conceal from himself, that prudence and reason enjoined his return to England. 'You have decided,' he writes to her, 'that I am to return to Ravenna. I shall accordingly return—and I shall *do* and *be* all that you wish. I cannot say more.'[3]

[1] See Moore's *Life*, iv. 263, 264.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 265.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 267.

Thus, about the middle of December, without taking leave of anyone, he departed from Venice and hastened by the well-known road to Ravenna, where he was received with open arms.

Before we leave this, the Venetian, period of Byron's life, we must glance at the productions and development of his genius during it. It is evident that a change both in himself and in his poetry took place at Venice. Here he found himself translated from the procrustean bed of English respectability to a society whose motto was, 'Live and let live.' However heavy the political pressure under which Venice lay, the freedom of private life was in no way invaded. On the contrary, Austria, while she promoted the material prosperity of the nations under her rule, winked at their excesses, in order to restrain them from politics. Here men lived, openly in the light of day, as they willed; no puritanism intervened to disturb them. The Catholic Church looked on calmly even when priests openly evaded celibacy, no one throwing a stone at them or thinking less of them because of the offence. All this must have been grateful to Byron; he who fought for the absolute right of individuality found here its freest play and scope. English society, as seen in the mirror of its opposite, appeared to him the more distasteful; and his bitterness against its prudery, its assumption of religion, and its bigotry grew more intense. But at the same time he came to regard life more and more in its naked realism and nothingness, and gradually turned from ideal views of life and the world. Here at Venice nothing was sacred or great; here the moral and spiritual significance of life shrank to the meanest proportions: sensual enjoyment appeared to be the only object of its people. Yet withal, in the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold,' written chiefly at Venice, the idealism of Byron's Muse reached its cul-

mination. An advance beyond this point was not possible; and, according to a law of nature, either a rapid change must take place or the state of tension must be relaxed. So was it with Byron. The Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' was followed by works of a very different character. The satirical and cynical tendencies of his genius found their vent in the poetry which Berni had called into life, and which had been transplanted a short time before to England by John Hookham Frere (Whistlecraft). In Italy, on the soil where it was born, Byron awoke to the full understanding of this kind of poetry, and instinctively felt its attractions. Taking Whistlecraft as his model, he made an attempt in 'Beppo,' which was eminently successful; and the style he had thus adopted soon attained maturity and strength in 'Don Juan,' which may be described as the Epic of epicurean nihilism: the first four cantos he wrote in Venice. His nature was, however, fundamentally ideal, and almost involuntarily Idealism breaks forth again and again in 'Don Juan' itself; and in his dramas flows along, like a double stream, side by side with the satire of that poem. Venice, also, from its mighty past, furnished him with the matter of those dramas, which he elaborated afterwards at Ravenna, where, after the paroxysm of his excesses, rest comparatively returned to him. Thus his residence in Venice was, both as respects his life and his poetry, a turning point with him—as will be more distinctly seen hereafter, when we come to the consideration of his works.

CHAPTER VIII.

RAVENNA, PISA, GENOA.

1820-1823.

RAVENNA was in the midst of preparations for the Carnival, and Byron, immediately after his arrival, was introduced at a brilliant party at the house of the Marchese Cavalli, an uncle of Theresa, to all her relations, and was received by them as a member of the family. He appeared openly as her regular and acknowledged *cicisbeo*, and makes merry at his being obliged to give his arm to his *dama*, to carry and fold her shawl, and perform such like offices of the *cavaliero servente*.[1] Although without any plan for the future, and quite undecided whether he would remain in Ravenna 'a day, a week, a year, or all my life,'[2] he forthwith set up an establishment. Allegra, the servants, and his ever-growing menagerie he had brought with him, the furniture he directed to be sent by sea. From Count Guiccioli he hired a suite of rooms in the Count's palace, so that the lovers again, with the husband's consent, lived under the same roof. Compared with his life in 'the Sea Sodom,' this relation was upon the whole a moral improvement for Byron, and he accordingly describes Ravenna in a letter to Hoppner 'as a dreadfully moral place, where you must not look at anybody's wife except your neighbour's—if you go to the next door but one, you are scolded, and presumed to be perfidious. And then a

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 271.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 271.

relazione or an *amicizia* seems to be a regular affair of from five to fifteen years, at which period, if there occur a widowhood, it finishes by a *sposalizio*; and in the meantime it has so many rules of its own, that it is not much better. A man actually becomes a piece of female property —they won't let their *serventi* marry until there is a vacancy for themselves.'[1] In this as in other respects, Byron accommodated himself to Italian manners with a flexibility not very usual in Englishmen, and returned to social life. He even paid his respects to the Cardinal Legate, frequented his parties, where, as he says, 'all the beauty, all the nobility, all the sanctity of Ravenna were gathered together.'[2] At the anniversary of the Pope's *tiara-tion* he failed not to appear. The general tone of society was unconstrained; they talked, drank coffee, played hazard for small stakes, and the ladies as everywhere were resplendent in silk and diamonds. Neither the aristocratic dissipations of London nor the coarser excesses of Venice were found at Ravenna: here there was no cosmopolitan intercourse, but life wore rather a narrow and provincial character. Byron, however, does not deny that he found among the higher classes culture and intelligence, for Ravenna was not only the see of a Papal Legate, but the central point of the Romagnese nobility. Shelley, on the other hand, thought it a wretched place, that the people were barbarians, and the language the most horrible patois conceivable. The seclusion of Ravenna rendered the appearance of a stranger, specially of a foreigner, a rare sight. Great, then, was the joy of Byron to receive here the visit of two countrymen, friends of his own, Bankes, the traveller whom we have already mentioned as one of Byron's university friends, and Sir Humphry Davy, on his return from

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 277. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 300.

his fourteenth ascent of Vesuvius. Byron relates a charming anecdote of the notions formed by Italian ladies of the science of the latter. Telling a lady (doubtless the Contessa) of Sir Humphry's preparation of gases, of the discovery of the safety lamp, and his mode of ungluing the Pompeian MSS., she said. 'But what do you call him?' "A great chemist," quoth I. "What can he do?" repeated the lady. "Almost anything," said I. "Oh then, mio Caro, do pray beg him to give me something to dye my eyebrows black. I have tried a thousand things and the colours all come off; and besides they don't grow; can't he invent something to make them grow?"'[1] And yet the Contessa was neither badly educated nor of a mean understanding. To its retired situation Ravenna owed also the specifically Italian character of its life, a point on which Byron laid great stress.[2] With unmistakable satisfaction he recurs again and again to his knowledge of Italy and the Italians;[3] averring that he had lived in it and with them as few foreigners had, and that the common run of travellers could not judge of Italy. But while thus interesting himself in the social, and, as we shall see, in the political life of the Italy of his own day, he remained almost entirely unaffected by the great historical recollections of Ravenna. Ravenna, with its well-deserved surname 'l'Antica,' displays at the present moment, in its magnificent and well-preserved monuments, the traces of the momentous historical events of which it has been the scene. Here under Honorius was the centre of the Roman Empire of the West, here the residence of Theodoric, here the seat of the Greek Exarchate. But these mighty vicissitudes in human affairs—empires rising and falling like the ebb and flow of the tide on the strand of

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 310.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] See Moore's *Life*, iv. 283, 336, 341-2.

Ravenna, elicited from Byron's harp scarcely a single note, although in 'Childe Harold' he delighted to surrender himself to the sway of such thoughts. In his letters and journals also, which, indeed, only express the feelings and humours of the day, there is not a remark in allusion to these historical recollections. His residence in Ravenna was, however, the period of his dramatic composition, and within two years he wrote there the dramas, 'Marino Faliero,' 'Sardanapalus,' the 'Two Foscari,' 'Cain,' 'Heaven and Earth,' began 'Werner' and the 'Deformed Transformed.' In addition to these he composed at Ravenna the fifth canto of 'Don Juan,' the 'Prophecy of Dante,' the 'Vision of Judgment,' and translated the episode of Francesca of Rimini in Dante's Inferno, and the Morgante Maggiore of Pulci,—an astonishing fertility!

The calm life in the palace of the Guiccioli, with its apparent peace and arrangements in accordance with the notions of Italian society, was of short duration. The Count, who, though treated with consideration as far as form went, felt himself in reality degraded to a mere cipher, withdrew, after a year's toleration of the *liaison*, his assent, and resolved that all intercourse between the two lovers should be broken off as no longer endurable. But this step, taken at such a time, exasperated not only his wife, but even her relations and public opinion, and especially the women, against him. The Contessa thought it harsh and unreasonable that she should be the only lady in Romagna to whom no *amico* should be allowed; if this privilege should be denied to her, she protested she would no longer remain with her husband.[1] Byron advised peace, but could not decide to cut the Gordian knot by his own departure. He palliated his

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 315.

weakness to himself by thinking that honour dictated the duty of remaining with his mistress. Theresa's family and the public considered that Count Guiccioli, if he would allow no *cicisbeo*, should have acted differently from the very first; that his interference now was the action of a fool, or of a rogue, whose purpose was vexation, or scandal, or extortion. Byron's friends were apprehensive for his safety, and gave him many warnings, the Count having the reputation of having got rid of two persons who were distasteful to him. Byron, however, was not to be hindered from taking his daily rides in the Pineta, but he rode constantly armed, and generally accompanied by a servant. He consoled himself too with the thought, that, Count Guiccioli had not the heart to spend twenty scudi —the average price for a clean-handed bravo;'[1] that death by assassination was not worse than death in any other way, but makes rather a very good melodramatic finish; that it might then be said of him as of Polonius, 'he made a good end.' Count Guiccioli's declaration of his readiness to take steps to prove the infidelity of his wife served only to injure his cause in the eyes of the public. Separation was at last insisted on by the Countess, contrary to the wishes of her family, and was decreed in the beginning of July 1820 by the Pope.[2] She sacrificed by this measure her whole social position, riches, her splendid home, all her prospects for the enjoyment of life. She received from her husband a pittance of 200*l.* a year, and was obliged, by the conditions of the decree of separation, to retire to a villa belonging to her father fifteen miles distant from Ravenna, where Byron could only occasionally visit her. After some time she returned, however, to Ravenna and, in accordance with the provisions of that deed, to her father's

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 320.

[2] See Byron's letter to Moore, *Life*, iv. 328 *et seq.*

house. Here Byron was wont to spend his evenings with her, listening with delight while she played on the piano or sang the melodies of Mozart and Rossini:[1] and when her father or brother were present, the conversation turned chiefly on politics. Byron's life, in truth, at this period was not only regular but monotonous, and in the Journal which he kept during the months of January and February 1821, its routine is constantly described in the words—'Rode—fired with pistols—dined—went out—heard music—came home—redde.' His only excitement was the interest he took in the attempted deliverance of Italy by the Carbonari.

Italy was then in a state of sullen fermentation. After the abolition of the rule of Napoleon, the old legitimacy, which had learnt nothing and forgot nothing, reappeared in the States of the Church and in Naples with inconceivable fatuity and arrogance. As if intoxicated by success it hastened to obliterate even the beneficial traces of Napoleonism, and instead of reforms re-introduced the old system of misgovernment. The intolerable oppression of the reactionary measures issuing from the Holy Alliance drove the Italians to the miserable resource of conspiracy, which has always failed, and the secret league of the Carbonari extended over the whole country. To this body the Gamba family belonged, and Theresa's brother Pietro, an enthusiastic youth of twenty-two, became one of their most zealous leaders, and was deeply initiated in all their plans. Pietro had conceived an ardent friendship for Byron, and by his instrumentality Byron was won over to join the league. Various motives, indeed, actuated him in taking this step. Byron had schooled himself into an

[1] He wrote at Genoa, shortly before his departure for Greece, the words to a Hindoo air which she used to sing to him.—*Life and Works*, xiv. 357.

exceeding admiration of Napoleon and hated legitimacy and the reaction. His imagination was charmed by the secret organisation, the degrees, and signs of the league; his ambitious desire for influence and active life seemed to find here a suitable field; and his undoubted sympathy with Italy, and especially with the Guiccioli family, led him to regard participation in its plans as a high and noble purpose. The end sought to be attained by Carbonarism—the liberation of Italy—he calls the very poetry of politics.[1] His sympathy for Italy, as well as his sorrow and anger at the rule of the foreigner, under which she sighed, he gave utterance to in the 'Prophecy of Dante,' one of his most ambitious and loftiest poems, written in the Terza rima of Dante, and breathing the very spirit of that poet, who seems in his eyes the poet of freedom, and in whose person he there expresses his political hopes for Italy. In this we doubtless trace the influence of the fair Contessa, who is said to have known Dante by heart.[2] He himself describes it as the best thing he had ever done.[3] Byron received at the same time a high degree in the league without passing through the intermediate ranks, being placed at the head of his own division, which was called the Americani. He distributed arms among the conspirators, and offered to the constitutional government of Naples a thousand louis d'ors as a contribution in aid of the struggle against the reaction of the Holy Alliance; his letters relative to this offer appear, however, to have fallen, through a spy, into the hands of the Papal Government. Against the Austrians he shows a perfect fury; he has no other name for them than

[1] Journal, Moore's *Life*, v. 104.

[2] It was written in the summer of 1819 and published in May 1821, with a dedication to the Countess Guiccioli, though without mention of her name.

[3] Moore's *Life*, iv. 294.

Barbarians or Huns. It annoyed although it amused him, that he was a thorn in the side of the Austrian police. In all probability his letters were opened by them; he at least was convinced of this, and wrote in them, on this very account, the bitterest things against the Austrian Government. The publication of an Italian translation of his 'Childe Harold' was prohibited in Austrian Italy; and in Ravenna he thought himself surrounded by their spies, who, according to his account, went so far as even to instigate his assassination. Though the Carbonari might be of one mind in the desire to abolish Austrian rule and to effect the unity of Italy, their views with regard to the form of government to be introduced widely differed. One section was content with constitutional government, while another aspired after a republic. The congresses at Troppau and Laibach, where princes in their blindness decided on the weal and woe of millions, whose will was never consulted, and who undertook to stem the course of the development of events, were, indeed, doing their utmost to lead men's minds to adopt the republican form of government. The hopes even of Byron—of all men the least republican in character—were for some time fixed on a general republic. The first manifestations of the movement in Ravenna Byron mentions in a letter to Murray:[1] 'Last night they have over-written all the city walls with "Up with the Republic!" and "Death to the Pope!" The police have been, all noon and after, searching for the inscribers, but have caught none as yet. They must have been all night about it, for the "Live Republics"—"Death to Popes and Priests," are innumerable. There is "Down with the Nobility" too; they are down enough already for that matter.' The latter cry against the nobility clearly showed the split among the

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 306-7.

Carbonari; for a considerable number of the nobility itself were among the most active members and promoters of the league. The conspirators were not, however, content with such threatenings; they enlisted political murder in their service. Of the assassinations which were perpetrated one occurred immediately before Byron's palace. One evening about eight o'clock (Dec. 9, 1820), just as Byron was about to pay his usual visit to the Contessa, he heard a shot; his servants rushing to the balcony cried out that some one had been murdered.[1] Followed by his powerful Venetian gondolier, Tita, Byron ran out into the street, where he found the commandant of the Papal troops, Del Pinto, a brave but most unpopular man, lying on the pavement pierced with five wounds. Soldiers, crowds of people, surrounded him, and an adjutant stood weeping and helpless by the side of the dying man, whom no one ventured to assist. Byron caused the wounded man to be lifted by a couple of men and carried into his house, where he soon after expired on Fletcher's bed. According to Medwin,[2] Byron represented the assassination as instigated by the police; that Del Pinto, though suspected of being a zealous Carbonaro, but too powerful a man to be arrested, was assassinated opposite his palace; that the spot was intentionally chosen for the deed, and that the police protected rather than prosecuted the murderers. The population of Ravenna were not, however, to be disturbed by these precursory symptoms, in their free and easy enjoyment of life in true southern fashion, but gave itself up, as usual to the joys of the Carnival. Even Byron himself was in those

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 37, 38.

[2] *Conversations*, pp. 38–40. [' The whole of what is put (by Medwin) into Lord Byron's mouth is a romance.'—Hobhouse, in the article of the *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1825, p. 23.]

days chosen to be one of a carnival-party. Earnestness, resolution, and energy, strict discipline and fixed unity of plan, were wanting to the Carbonari—each was ready to shift responsibility on the other. Although Byron offered his palace as a rendezvous and a kind of fortress, they put off the rising from day to day, and preferred to await rather than commence the attack. The Government and their supporters the Sanfedists were, on their side, not less afraid of a decisive step. Reconnaissances were made of the movements of the Austrians, but nothing could ever be positively ascertained. Messages passed to and fro between the different committees, specially those at Bologna and Forli; plans were concerted; directions were received from the chiefs, and watchwords were changed for safety's sake—but notwithstanding, nothing came of all this. At last, Feb. 4, 1821, the news was brought to Ravenna that 'the Barbarians' had received the order to march; but instead of crossing on the 15th, as was generally expected, they crossed the Po on the 7th. Nevertheless the Italian cause was not considered desperate at Ravenna, provided the Neapolitans remained united and firm; although Byron admits, with a shrug of his shoulders, that it was not easy to guess what the Italians would do. When the Government took courage to decree that everyone found with arms in his possession should be punished, fear and despair seized the Ravennese; they brought back to his house the weapons and ammunition which Byron had given them, without even asking his permission. The miserable issue of the whole movement is known. The Neapolitans were routed by the Austrian army; the constitution which had just been introduced was abolished; and absolute government under the protection of Austrian bayonets was again restored. All Italy accused the Neapolitans of disunion, cowardice, and treason; the ill

success of the insurrection, so long prepared, was laid at their door; they were overwhelmed with all manner of insults. 'Here in Romagna,' writes Byron, in his 'detached thoughts,'—'the efforts were necessarily limited to preparations and good intentions—whether "hell will be paved" with those "good" intentions, I know not, but there will probably be good store of Neapolitans to walk upon the pavement, whatever may be its composition. Slabs of lava from their own mountain, with the bodies of their own d—d souls for cement, would be the fittest causeway for Satan's corso.'[1] He is, however, reasonable enough to admit, that a whole nation should not be condemned on account of one province, though he fears that Italy will be thrown back for 500 years into slavery and barbarism; and he tells Moore that 'a fair patriot' (doubtless the Contessa) lamented to him with tears in her eyes, that the Italians must now again return to making operas.[2]

This turn in political affairs was accompanied with results which powerfully reacted on Byron. Against his person, indeed, nothing could be done: he was an Englishman, and moreover a peer; two facts which he never forgot. His participation in Carbonarism had, therefore, demanded little courage, since he knew that he risked nothing. Still he was too much a thorn in the side both of the Austrian and the Papal police and also of the priesthood, that they should not make efforts to get rid of him. The means of effecting their purpose was easily found. Count Gamba and his sons, whose active share in Carbonarism was no secret, were banished, along with many associates in suffering, from the States of the Church, and their possessions—so at least Medwin[3] maintains—confiscated.

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 152.

[2] *Ibid.* v. 148.

[3] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 37. ['heir possessions were not

As, in the deed of separation, the condition had been imposed on the Countess Guiccioli, that she must either live in her father's house or retire into a cloister, it was foreseen that she, and with her Byron, would follow her banished friends.

When, therefore, Theresa's father and brother Pietro were ordered, about the middle of July, to leave Ravenna within four and twenty hours—Pietro was, indeed, the same night seized by soldiers and carried over the frontiers—her condition became desperate, and her letter to Byron entreating his aid is most affecting.[1] To add to her troubles her husband thought the moment exceedingly favourable to force her to return to him or to put her in a convent. Nothing, therefore, was left to her but to fly secretly, and repair, after a short stay in Bologna, to Florence, whither her father and brother had preceded her. Byron invoked the mediation of the Duchess of Devonshire, then residing in Spaa, to procure at Rome, if possible, the revocation of the order of banishment of the Gambas. The request, though acceded to readily by her Grace, was unsuccessful. Byron still remained in Ravenna, mainly out of defiance, that it might not seem as if he were included in the sentence of banishment, and to make the authorities feel his unassailable position. He had, moreover, become so accustomed to Ravenna, that he found it hard to leave the spot; next to Greece, as he told Medwin, he loved no place so much.[2] With this preference were blended some superstitious presentiments, under the influence of which his removing from Ravenna seemed to him the prelude of much evil both to himself and to the Contessa. The poor of the city presented a petition to the Cardinal

confiscated.'—Hobhouse, in the article of *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1825, p. 23.]

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 205. [2] *Ibid.* 32.

Legate, entreating him to induce Byron to remain, for he had gained the undivided sympathy of the poorer part of the population; out of his income, then amounting to 4,000*l.*, he had devoted the fourth part to benevolent purposes.[1] He had even contributed frequently to ecclesiastical, i.e. Catholic objects; as for instance, to the restoration of churches and monasteries, to the improvement of organs, and such like objects. But the very sympathies thus enlisted in his favour necessarily increased the aversion and fear of the spiritual authorities for him, and the well-intentioned petition only threw oil on the flame. Byron's complicity in the aims of Carbonarism was only too well known. Under these circumstances, he at once saw that life in Ravenna could no longer be safe to him; his friends, specially the Contessa, were truly apprehensive for him. He, nevertheless, still postponed his departure. The choice of another place of abode was difficult. The Gambas had turned their thoughts to Switzerland, and Byron caused enquiries to be made about a country-house near Geneva for them and for himself. But, contrary to the wishes of the Contessa, for whom on this occasion he showed little loving consideration, he changed his opinion, when he came to reflect on the intolerant Calvinism of the Genevese, the swarms of English tourists, the expense of living, his inability to speak French, and other drawbacks to Swiss life. He preferred therefore to remain in Italy, and fixed his eye on Pisa or Lucca as suitable places of residence. In the letters of these days the thought of Greece, and of taking part in the Greek war of liberation, already engaged his attention. Thus the month of July passed away without his coming to a decision. Oppressed and dejected, Byron applied to Shelley, who had settled at

[1] According to Shelley—*Letters from Abroad, &c.*, ii. 310—his almsgiving amounted annually to about 100*l.*

which could be weighed against them.'[1] In Bologna Byron by appointment met Rogers, who was returning from Venice. After enjoying a day's rest they crossed the Apennines together and proceeded to Florence,[2] from whence Rogers continued his journey to the south.[3]

The Countess Guiccioli had meantime made the Casa Lanfranchi as comfortable as possible for her friend, with whom she was now again to live under the same roof. The separation from her husband having been formally completed, she could now consider herself absolved from scruples which had previously bound her. The condition, which still subsisted, that she should live in her father's house, does not appear to have been observed; he seems, rather, to have lived in another house. The Palazzo Lanfranchi, built, it was supposed, by Michael Angelo, with its façade of unhewn marble, lay with its charming garden on the Lung Arno, and had this peculiar source of delight to Byron, that almost all the rooms were thought to be haunted, so that the servants, especially Fletcher, with difficulty mastered their fears. Lanfranchi had been one of the persecutors of Ugolino,[4] and in punishment for this his spirit was supposed to walk about at night. A picture of Ugolino and his sons hung in Byron's room.[5] As at Ravenna so now at Pisa, Byron loved the poetical background of his place of residence, while its historical monuments and recollections left him cold and untouched: thus he mentions neither the Campo Santo, nor the Baptistery,

[1] 'Detached Thoughts.' Moore's *Life*, v. 278.

[2] Moore's *Life*, v. 278.

[3] This meeting with Byron, Rogers beautifully describes in his poem 'Italy.' Some persons, however, have been malicious enough to say, that Byron so managed matters, that he and his friend passed through the most beautiful scenery in the dark. See *Athenæum*, May 16, 1868, p. 687.

[4] The story of Ugolino is told not only in Dante but in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

[5] Medwin's *Conversation*, p. 3.

nor the leaning tower, nor does he say a word about Galileo; and yet the desolate majesty and grandeur of Pisa must have made a far deeper impression on him than on Leigh Hunt, who in 'The Liberal'[1] has given a very commonplace description of it.

Byron's mode of life in Pisa maintained the same character of perverse irregularity as before. He used to breakfast about two o'clock; between three and four the friends arrived, who were wont to accompany him in his rides; after first playing a game at billiards, they drove to the gates of the city, where they mounted their horses. Their ride usually extended to the Cascine and the pine forest, which, as at Ravenna, extended to the sea. On the east side of the town Byron afterwards found a Podere or farm,[2] which had great charms for him, partly on account of a beautiful girl who lived there, partly because he could indulge his favourite pastime of pistol-shooting. In spite of the violent trembling of his hand he was the most unerring shot of them all—next to him came Shelley—and felt as much childish joy when he made a good shot as vexation when he made a bad one. Even in this diversion he could endure no rival. Towards sunset they returned to the city; and half an hour after sunset, followed the so-called dinner; he then devoted two hours to the Contessa, and he read and wrote during the greater part of the night.

> I sing by night—sometimes an owl,
> And now and then a nightingale;

so he says in 'Don Juan.'[3] In these hours of the night he finished at Pisa 'Werner' and the 'Deformed Trans-

[1] *Letters from Abroad.* Liberal, i. 97–120. John Hunt, London, 1822.

[2] Moore's *Life*, v. 357.

[3] Canto xv. 97.

formed,' and wrote from the fourth to the eleventh canto of 'Don Juan.'

In one respect only his life at Pisa differed from his life at Ravenna; at Pisa he became the centre of a circle of English friends, which led him to greater sociability and hospitality. He returned even to the idea of getting up an amateur theatre, and particularly wished 'Othello' to be performed, proposing to take the part of Iago himself. The plan, however, came to nothing, owing to the opposition of the Contessa. Social intercourse in his house differed in nothing from the usual intercourse of society; least of all had it a literary character. One result of these parties at Pisa was, that on them Captain Medwin grounded his notorious 'Conversations with Lord Byron.' It has been already mentioned that Shelley had been for some time a resident at Pisa; at a later period, besides Medwin, Captain Williams, Trelawny, Taaffe, and Leigh Hunt with his family, arrived for a longer residence. Hobhouse also paid him a visit at Pisa; his sudden arrival affected Byron almost as much as his unexpected meeting with Lord Clare.[1] Too many of the acquaintances formed at this period contributed only to produce complications and embarrassments of the gravest kind to Byron, and it seemed as if the presentiments which he felt on leaving Ravenna were only too soon to be verified. To begin with the least important member of the group, with the Irishman Taaffe: he was dull and tiresome, a butt for the raillery of his countrymen, and was devoured with the vanity of appearing as an author. Byron, the Countess Guiccioli tells us,[2] was the only one who did not turn him

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 360.

[2] *Recollections of Lord Byron*, English translation, ii. 287.

his friends, and began to assault them furiously. Shelley received a sabre-cut on his head, which threw him from his horse. The corporal had meantime galloped up the Lung Arno. Byron, who because of his wearing a medal took him for an officer, rode after him, demanded his name, throwing him his glove as a challenge; he then rode back to the gate to the aid of his friends. Meantime a great crowd had gathered together; Byron's servants (the Lanfranchi Palace was at no great distance from the gate) rushed out to the scene, and one of them wounded the corporal rather dangerously in the side. 'I have some rough-handed folks about,' adds Byron in a letter to Scott,[1] not without a touch of swagger. The police were of course soon at the spot, and began a very searching examination; two of Byron's servants were put in prison, but notwithstanding all their enquiries, and although the circumstance took place in the light of day, in the most populous street of the city, it could never be ascertained by whom and with what weapon the dragoon had been wounded. Byron, in opposition to his friends, attributed far too much importance to the affair. Mrs. Shelley, indeed, though she says that Mr. Dawkins, the English consul at Florence, approved of Byron's procedure, does not hesitate to express her own opinion, that not much credit was to be got from such a brawl. Copies of all the depositions taken in the course of the investigation of the affair were sent to Leigh Hunt in London, for publication in the 'Examiner,' in order to obviate any misrepresentations. Although to all appearance adjusted, this affair laid the foundation of the banishment of the Gamba family out of Tuscany.[2]

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 331.

[2] See the deposition in the Appendix to Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 443 *et seq.* *Relics of Shelley*, ed. by R. Garnett. London, 1862, p. 109; E. J. Trelawny's *Recollections*, &c. London, 1858, p. 113 *et seq.*

friend, and admitting him to be a gentleman, described him as the 'head of the shabby-genteel vulgar cockney school.'[1] In the year 1816 Hunt dedicated to Byron his story of 'Rimini,' but the unbecoming, familiar tone of the dedication elicited general disapprobation. When the separation took place Hunt was one of the few journalists who had the courage to take Byron's part, a service which the latter highly esteemed: and when Byron left England he bid him adieu in a poem. At the instigation of Shelley, who was a zealous patron and friend of Hunt, Byron now invited him to come to Pisa, because he hoped to find in Hunt the fitting instrument for carrying out a plan which he had very much at heart.[2]

For some time Byron had cherished the thought of editing a journal, or at least of taking an active part in such a work. This idea he first communicated, and at considerable length, to Moore (December 25, 1820), who was then living at Paris, and endeavoured to gain him over to the scheme. They were both to return to London —such was the plan—for in London only could such an undertaking be carried out. If the thing were taken up in earnest—and otherwise it would not succeed—their journal would soon throw the productions of mediocrity into the shade, and bring in such profitable returns, that Moore would not only be able to pay off his debts, but live with his family in ease and comfort; that they

[1] *Life and Works*, vi. 411.

[2] On Byron's connection with Hunt the most various and perplexing statements have been put forth. Byron himself represents it falsely, when he asserts, that he had been pressed by Hunt and his brother, and had, in an unlucky moment, yielded to them. Shelley's letter to Hunt, written immediately after his return from Ravenna and which contains Byron's invitation, is given in the second volume of Shelley's *Essays and Letters from Abroad*, p. 325 *et seq.*; and also in Hunt's *Byron and his Contemporaries*.

Heaven and Hell.' Murray, his usual publisher, had become timid, and many of his literary advisers appear to have strengthened his apprehensions. Though he did not venture positively to refuse to publish them, he repeatedly, to Byron's great vexation, allowed his manuscripts to lie in hand for an unusual time, and hence arose differences and misunderstandings between poet and publisher. In one or two cases Byron actually had recourse to another publisher—or Murray availed himself of the services of another firm. These vexations and difficulties would be surmounted at a stroke, as soon as Byron had the control of a journal the editor and publisher of which would not presume to entertain such scruples, but would naturally welcome his thoughts and opinions whatever direction they might take. The labours of editor, properly speaking, Byron neither could nor would undertake; for this office he desired to select Moore, and when Moore declined it, he offered it to Leigh Hunt. Byron's friends, Moore and Hobhouse particularly, warned him against such a connection, considering it unbecoming his position both in society and literature; Murray, also, and Gifford shook their heads in disapprobation. They all evidently knew the characters both of Byron and Leigh Hunt too well not to see, that such an alliance must very soon become a source of dissatisfaction and strife on both sides. Byron, however, was obstinate, and was the less to be moved from his plan as Shelley had proposed it to him. Shelley was far too childlike in character to understand rightly men like Hunt and Byron, and was far too liberal and ready with sacrifices in assisting the former in his depressed circumstances, not merely according to, but beyond his ability. From the manner in which he acted, as well as from the judgments he expressed, it is evident that he over-estimated Hunt both as a man and as

could scrape together. Byron, too, had sent, on Shelley's security, 200*l.* This sum reached London only after Hunt's departure, and was employed, it would appear, by his friends to clear the debts he had left behind him. Byron, who occupied only the upper floor of his palace, gave Hunt the use of the lower, which was unoccupied, furnishing it also for him at his own expense. Shelley and his wife managed his housekeeping. How far these friendly acts were meant as presents or as advances, cannot well be ascertained. Altogether, the pecuniary relations between Hunt on the one hand, and Byron and Shelley on the other, are of so complicated a nature, that it appears almost impossible to understand clearly how matters stood, and Shelley's sudden death still further increased the confusion. But it is labour misspent to continue the investigations of this matter; it is sufficient to say, that it was the source of bitterness and vexation to all concerned, and the occasion of mutual recrimination. What were Hunt's thoughts on these pecuniary relations, he has very frankly expressed; he thought it a great proof of friendship on his part, that he permitted himself to accept the rich gifts of his friends: in fact, he almost lived at the expense of his friends, and received presents as services which were due to him. He had, moreover, no knowledge of business; he was frivolous and inconstant, weak and vain, and without the love of labour. Dickens has, it is generally admitted, portrayed him as Harold Skimpole in 'Bleak House.'

Hunt, with his family, landed (at the end of June, or the beginning of July, 1822) at Leghorn, and was received there by Trelawny, who commanded the 'Bolivar,'[1] a yacht which had been built for Byron at Genoa. Byron

[1] Williams (*Shelley's Essays, &c., from Abroad*, ii. 351) praises the 'Bolivar' as the prettiest craft he had ever seen.

to seek medical advice.[1] She was introduced to the Countess Guiccioli, but only casually, nor was the approach to further intimacy made easy to her. The two ladies could not understand each other, Mrs. Hunt knowing nothing of Italian and taking no pains to learn it, and, perhaps, they had not the best opinion of each other. Their six children were a constant annoyance to Byron, while Hunt on his side thought (or affected to think) that Byron instilled mischievous principles into them. Thus the incompatibility of this connection was displayed from its very commencement. Hunt believed that, because he lived in Byron's house and was to be engaged with him in a common literary undertaking, he might put himself on terms of intimacy and equality with him; and Byron, probably not in the tenderest manner, repelled this assumption. Like some men of rank, Byron permitted himself to be familiar with others, though he did not approve the like freedom in them. Following the advice of Shelley, who always punctiliously observed the forms and proprieties of society, Hunt in addressing Byron, addressed him with his title, which previously he had failed to do, even in dedicating his poem to Byron. Probably he now went to the other extreme, so that Byron teazed him about it, but could not make him desist. Byron often used the nickname given him by Shelley, Leontius (Leigh Huntius). Hunt was one of those men who brooked no superior either socially or intellectually; while Byron would recognise no one, with the single exception of Moore, as his equal who was not of equal birth. Hunt afterwards admitted in his 'Autobiography,'

[1] The Italian physician, who was called in, pronounced Mrs. Hunt's case hopeless, and communicated his opinion to her husband. We may easily imagine, that so gloomy a prospect must have greatly depressed Hunt's feelings. Compare *Shelley's Essays, &c.*, ii. 358.

that he had been jealously sensitive of his position, and that Byron was justified in taking offence; and that altogether he was wanting in compliance with and respect for Byron. Hunt often presumed to say to him things intentionally disagreeable, imagining rudeness to be frankness. With natures so different there could not fail to be differences of opinion; but Byron hated disputation, and Hunt would not suppress or even modify the divergence of his views; and worst of all, the weaker sides of Byron's character were those alone on which Hunt meanly and basely allowed himself to dwell. It may be true that Byron exposed himself to the reproach of Ophelia's words:

> Rich gifts wax poor, when givers prove unkind;[1]

but his readiness to help Hunt was speedily checked by the discovery that presents were only like a drop in the ocean to Hunt, who had neither the will nor the power to do anything for himself. Thus the blame must be shared by both: a relation between two individuals, in which the one considered himself socially and intellectually on an equality with the other, although absolutely dependent on him for support, and who was meant to serve only as a tool with respect to his literary labours, was without a sound or stable foundation, nor could it lead to a happy termination.

Such were the circumstances under which the journal, so long projected, was published, with a title 'The Liberal,' somewhat tame, in comparison with those originally proposed by Byron. Hunt's brother, John, whom he termed 'a stiff, sturdy, conscientious man,'[2] was the publisher. William Hazlitt, who after Shelley's death was secured as a contributor in his place, superintended the editorial department in London, a position which

[1] , act iii. sc. 1. [2] Moore's *Life*, v. 374.

accounts perhaps for his taking Hunt's part against Byron, when the journal ceased to appear. Byron made over to Hunt without any *honorarium* all the pieces which Murray hesitated to publish. The first number opened with Byron's 'Vision of Judgment;' and thus at its commencement, the fate of the new journal with the English public was sealed. Even Hunt considered it objectionable. He had not seen it till it was printed, the manuscript having been sent by Murray, without passing through his hands, to the publisher, John Hunt. He afterwards, in his 'Autobiography,' praises this poem as the finest satire since Pope. Shelley contributed a translation of the Brocken scene from 'Faust.' The remaining articles were chiefly furnished by Hunt and Hazlitt: there was scarcely another contributor. Moore's co-operation, though earnestly desired, could not be secured. Hunt says, that he himself wrote nearly the half of the whole, but pleads his feeble health as an excuse for the weakness of these contributions. The principles of 'The Liberal' were enunciated in the preface: it professed to pay homage to genius alone, and to respect neither rank nor legitimacy, nor tradition; but this utter disregard of all political, social, and religious relations could not but excite general displeasure. To add to this, as Shelley was removed by death from the undertaking, even before the first part appeared, and Byron soon ceased to take any interest in it, 'The Liberal' had but a miserable existence, and ended its short career with the fourth number. The four parts collected together were not published till Byron and Hunt had settled at Genoa.

The sea, which Shelley loved if possible more passionately than Byron, was destined to be the scene of his death. After seeing Hunt settled at Pisa, he returned to his villa at Lerici, from whence he sailed in the boat which was

pocket of Shelley's coat, who appears to have met death with that stoical composure, which he had before displayed in the face of danger on the Lake of Geneva. As the bodies were in a state of decomposition, and it was difficult to convey them to a Protestant place of burial—the Quarantine laws also, which required the burning of every thing washed up by the sea, presented obstacles to this—it was determined to burn the remains, after the manner of the ancients, on the shore—a resolution which would, as his friends thought, be in complete accordance with Shelley's peculiar views. The consent of the authorities having been obtained, and the requisite materials procured, Trelawny, who was the principal manager and conductor of the business, began his operations on August 15 under a burning summer sun. On this day Williams' body was burned (it does not appear that Byron and Hunt were present at the ceremony); and the ashes having been collected were afterwards conveyed to England. On the following day, in the presence of Byron, Hunt, and Medwin, the burning of Shelley's remains took place. In spite of the frankincense and wine, which were poured on the funeral pile, and notwithstanding the poetical descriptions which these friends have attempted to give of the scene, the impressions excited must have been horrible, and Trelawny's vivid description is well suited to cure every reader of the thought, that cremation should ever be substituted for burial in the earth. Hunt admits it was a horrible spectacle, worthy of a German ballad, and desires never again to have such a waking dream. The reckless and adventurous Trelawny was the only one whose nerves could bear the dreadful scene; Byron and Hunt, far from taking any active part, remained seated in the carriage, and were forced to avert their faces. As soon as the process of burning was over,

Byron, notwithstanding the heat of the mid-day sun, swam to his yacht, which was anchored at some distance off; an imprudence which brought on an attack of fever on the following day. When he drove back with Hunt through the pine wood to Pisa, they broke out into forced and spasmodic merriment; they laughed, they sang, they shouted, merely to banish the sense of the horrible—just as Hamlet seeks to overcome the fear of his father's ghost by irreverent jests. Such revulsion of feeling was not unknown to Byron; who in the 'Corsair' says:

> Strange though it seem—yet with extremest grief
> Is link'd a mirth—it doth not bring relief—
> That playfulness of sorrow ne'er beguiles,
> And smiles in bitterness—but still it smiles;
> And sometimes with the wisest and the best,
> Till even the scaffold echoes with their jest!
> Yet not the joy to which it seems akin—
> It may deceive all hearts save that within.[1]

The whole proceeding was very differently judged and excited an unpleasant sensation: to the Tuscan Government it was a new embarrassment. The urn with Shelley's ashes was deposited in the Protestant burial ground at Rome near the pyramid of Cestius, by the side of Keats and of a child of his own who died before him; in that cemetery, of which Shelley in the preface to his 'Adonais' said, 'that it might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.'

In consequence of the affair with the corporal of dragoons at Pisa and the murderous attack on Pietro Gamba at Montenero, the Gambas, father and son, had been banished from Tuscany,[2] and Byron, accompanied by the Contessa, had now again to prepare to follow them. While residing

[1] Canto ii. 13.

[2] According to Williams (Shelley's *Essays, &c. from Abroad*, ii. 356), the Gamba family received the order to leave Tuscany at Leghorn, July 2.

at Montenero, he had turned his thoughts to America and made particular enquiries about South America 'the land of Bolivar.' During a visit to the American squadron at anchor in the harbour of Leghorn, he was received with so much honour and respect, that he was greatly taken with the Americans, and professed, that he would rather get a bow from an American than a snuff-box from an Emperor. But the answer to his enquiries was so dissuasive, that he entirely renounced the thought, especially when he came to consider his mistress and friend, whom he intended to take with him. Once more he began to think of Greece; but the state of that country was so unpromising, that he dared not expose the Contessa to its privations and dangers. Switzerland, too, was again considered, and even the wild scheme of having the 'Bolivar' brought by Trelawny by land (over the Alps!) to the lake of Geneva was talked of.[1] So at last he decided for Genoa, whither the father and brother of Theresa had already repaired. In the suburb of Albaro, Mrs. Shelley hired for Byron and the Gambas a spacious house, the Villa Saluzzo, lying amid vineyards and olive woods; while another residence, Casa Negroto, was taken by the same lady for herself and the Hunts.[2] The removal to Genoa was effected towards the end of September, but in a manner exceedingly characteristic of Byron. Though he paid the travelling expenses of Hunt and his family, he refused to travel in their company. They met, however, at Lerici, where Byron was detained for four days by illness—'in the worst inn's worst room.' Accompanied by Trelawny, who acted as the agent, and manager for Byron, Hunt

[1] Shelley's *Essays, &c.*, ii. 359.

[2] Walter Savage Landor, the celebrated author of *The Imaginary Conversations*, occupied a third villa in Albaro, Casa Pallavicini; he does not seem, however, to have formed any intimacy with Byron, on the contrary he was filled with aversion both to him and his poetry.

on the coast, sent notes and occasional verses to the Countess, and read Count D'Orsay's unpublished London Journal with great interest, as he had himself known most of the persons who were mentioned in it. But this intercourse with the Blessington family was but the lulling of the thoughts which were passing within him. His determination to leave Italy, and go to Greece to assist in the war of Liberation and to take an active part in politics, ripened at last into action, and his short residence in Genoa is important in the record of his life only as being the termination of his residence in Italy and the starting point for his last expedition to Greece.

results of Carbonarism, as well as from his own vexatious differences with its governments; he yearned for an unfettered condition, where he would not be cramped by laws and police. Perhaps, too, he had grown rather weary of his relation to the Countess Guiccioli,[1] although he had displayed a constancy of affection to her, which he had never exhibited in any previous *liaison*. Passion, however, had fled from this, and calm well-regulated affection was never Byron's strength. Besides all this, the recollections of his wanderings in Greece, of those years during which he had enjoyed the most unalloyed happiness he ever knew, and felt most at ease with himself and in harmony with the world, returned in full power to his mind. The spirit of his youth, even more than the spirit of classical associations with all their poetry, breathed on him from Greece, and he would not have been the poet he was if the forms and images, decked in colours ever fresh and fair, of the days he spent there, and of the perennial beauty of the land, had not from time to time profoundly moved his heart. Greece was his destiny for life and for death, and he could not divest himself of the presentiment. Under the influence of such feelings he was unable to withstand the offers made to him by the Greek Committee in London, flattering in a high degree as they were to his vanity; for feeling alone did not actuate his final resolve, circumstances had much to do in determining a character, never, as he once said, conspicuous for decision. The Greek Committee which had been formed in London, and of which Douglas Kinnaird

[1] Such an issue of this connection Shelley had for some time foreseen. 'La Guiccioli'—he says in a letter of October 1821—'is a very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian, who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron, and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness.'—*Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, ii. 333.

was arranged that Byron should meet Blaquière, who had meanwhile been in the Morea, at Zante, to consult with him there on the further steps which were to be taken. Byron now sold his yacht to the Earl of Blessington, and hired the English brig 'Hercules' of 120 tons, a vessel with which Trelawny, so very learned in all matters connected with ships, was extremely dissatisfied. It was, he thought, heavy and slow, and a more handy and quick-sailing clipper would have been better adapted for the narrow waters of the Archipelago, and for action against the numerous pirates infesting those seas.[1]

The day of departure drew on. Byron, ever inclined to superstition, could not banish evil presentiments, but questioned whether he should ever see his friends again; by and bye he would sanguinely hope that he would return in a few months. He was so affected on taking leave of the Earl and Countess of Blessington, that he was obliged to throw himself on a sofa and burst into incontrollable tears; to all of the party he gave some little farewell gift. In the early dawn of July 15, 1823, he at last embarked on board the 'Hercules,' which was towed out of the harbour of Genoa by the boats of some American ships then lying there. Strange to say, it was a Friday on which they set sail, a day on which he usually avoided beginning any undertaking. Besides Byron, the company on board the ship consisted of Count Pietro Gamba, Trelawny, who had been invited by Byron to join the expedition,[2] Dr. Bruno, a young Italian physician fresh from the university, whom Byron had taken into his service,[3] Captain Scott, the commander

[1] *Recollections*, p. 202.

[2] Moore's *Life*, vi. 54.

[3] 'To give some idea of the silly stories that were told to the prejudice of Lord Byron, and which some of his biographers have shown every

poem addressed to him by Goethe,[1] and replied by letter the same day to the great poet.[2] He received also from the venerable Ignatio, Archbishop of Arta, letters of introduction to Mavrocordato and Marco Bozzaris. Here he was joined by Mr. Hamilton Browne,[3] a Scotch gentleman, who possessed a very extensive knowledge both of men and things connected with Greece, and who induced the party to change their course from Zante to Cephalonia, where Colonel Napier[4] was the English Resident, a known Philhellenist, from whom much help in furtherance of the expedition might fairly be expected. Coasting slowly along, they observed the island of Elba, Piombino in the Maremma, the muddy mouth of the Tiber, the classical Soracte and other prominent land-marks. Continuing their voyage, they passed by Stromboli, sending forth clouds of dark vapour:—'You will see this scene,' said he to Trelawny, 'in a fifth canto of "Childe Harold,"'[5]—sailed between Scylla and Charybdis, saw Messina in all its magnificence, and Ætna, 'covered with a thick cloud of smoke.' Byron's health and spirits were excellent. 'Never,' says Trelawny,[6] 'was I on shipboard with a better companion than Byron; he was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship; when appealed to, he always answered, "Do as you like." Byron's nature rose, not so much in harmony with his greater aims and purposes—though to a certain extent this may be said of him, as soon as he appeared in the

[1] See Moore's *Life*, vi. p. 66 *et seq.* [2] *Ibid.* p. 70.

[3] Mr. Hamilton Browne wrote an interesting description of the voyage for *Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1834.

[4] Afterwards Sir Charles James Napier; he was born 1782, and died 1853.

[5] *Recollections*, p. 187. [6] *Ibid.* p. 191.

affairs of Greece—as with the mighty objects that surrounded and impressed him, a trait which accords with his impulsive and feminine character. Every day at noon Byron and Trelawny sprang overboard into the sea—Byron's only exercise during the voyage, his lameness interfering with his walking on deck. Pistol-shooting was not omitted on board the vessel, a fowl or an empty bottle serving as target; two shots were seldom requisite to dispatch the former.

At length, August 2, Cephalonia and Zante were sighted, and next morning,[1] the 'Hercules' came to anchor in the harbour of Argostoli. Byron, as he recognised the outlines of the Morea, pointed them out to Trelawny, and said:[2] 'I don't know why it is, but I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here, were taken off my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst in his frigate.' The secretary of the English Resident came on board to welcome Byron, and assure him in the name of Colonel Napier, who was then absent, that every assistance would most readily be afforded to the expedition, so far as was compatible with the duty of strict neutrality; though strict neutrality might be made to admit of a considerable measure of active help. He told him at the same time, that Captain Blaquière had already set out for Corfu, whence he intended to return immediately to England—a piece of information which naturally threw Byron in a very bad humour. The difficulty of obtaining authentic and impartial accounts as to the complicated condition of the affairs of Greece, and the most effective

[1] Dr. Kennedy says that Lord Byron arrived on August 6.—*Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron.*

[2] *Recollections*, p. 201.

manner of furnishing assistance, was greatly increased by this mischance; little heed could be given to the statements of the different chiefs, each of whom strenuously endeavoured, whether by truth or by falsehood, to gain Byron to his side. A messenger was immediately dispatched by Byron to find Blaquière at Corfu, and another to Marco Bozzaris at Missolonghi. The former could nowhere fall in with Blaquière, who had gone without leaving a single memorandum for Byron. The second brought back, indeed, a letter in reply from Bozzaris,[1] but almost immediately after the receipt of it there arrived the account of the death of that renowned chief. The state of affairs now became more confused than ever, and Byron, who had meanwhile been appointed its principal agent by the London Committee, found it advisable to prolong his stay at Cephalonia. Hamilton Browne and Trelawny were forthwith sent off with letters to the Greek Government, if a Greek Government were to be found. Together they visited Tripolitza, Argos, Napoli di Romania, Corinth, Salamis and Hydra. There Browne entered into negotiations with the Greek authorities about the intended loan, and accompanied by their emissaries returned to London provided also with letters of introduction from Byron. Trelawny, on the other hand, attached himself to the chief Odysseus[2] at Athens, whose youngest sister he not long afterwards married; he saw Byron again only in his coffin. Byron himself, who at first remained for four weeks on board the 'Hercules' in the harbour, and who landed only to take an airing every evening on horseback, now found it convenient to pay off the vessel, to land his stores, and to take a residence for himself, Count Gamba, and his

[1] See the letter in Moore's *Life*, vi. 75.

[2] Odysseus, an exceedingly ambitious and energetic leader, had in earlier life been in the service of Ali Pacha.—Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 190

returns at Metaxata, a pleasant and healthy village about four miles and a half from Argostoli, where he remained till December 27, when he embarked for Missolonghi.[1]

For this lengthened residence Dr. Kennedy[2] assigns a reason which clearly enough indicates his own narrow point of view. Byron, so he relates, had made up his mind to proceed to the Morea on a certain Sunday, and had requested his baggage and his horses to be sent on board: that, however, Captain Scott opposed this, and would not tolerate such 'heathenish and outlandish doings on board his ship;' and that, in consequence, Byron had altered his resolution, and, whether from vexation or indecision and indifference, had postponed his departure. This incident may be very true, but there were far weightier and deeper grounds for Byron's delay. The delay originated for the most part in deliberate calculation. Byron would not go to Greece as a volunteer, but as one whose aid was courted and whose presence was invited; he had not come to help a party, but a nation, though indeed the nation could hardly be said to exist. He awaited therefore its summons. Trelawny pretends to show us the thoughts which were rising in his innermost man or were excited in him by others. It was admitted that the Greeks almost universally were in favour of a monarchical form of government. In this case they evidently needed a foreign king, in order to hold in check the rapacious, quarrelsome, and jealous chiefs. Why,

[1] Kennedy, p. 2.

[2] [This is hardly a fair representation of Dr. Kennedy's remark. He states, indeed, the blunt refusal of Scott, the captain of the 'Hercules,' to embark Lord Byron's horses on a Sunday, and then adds: 'This refusal of the Captain paved the way, it is probable, to circumstances which induced his lordship to change his mind, and, with other causes, led him, instead of hastening his departure, to remain four months in Cephalonia.' —Kennedy's *Conversations, &c.*, p. 11.]

then, might not the Greeks choose Byron for their sovereign? 'If they make me the offer,' Byron once replied to such a hint thrown out, 'I will perhaps not reject it.' He recurred to this many times in a half-sportive tone, and Trelawny is convinced that if Byron 'had lived to reach the congress of Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million silver crowns would have been offered a gold one.'[1] The mind which loved to dwell on the plan of buying an American province or a Greek island might well cherish such a conception. Had not his old friend and host Ali Pacha raised himself from the lowest position to princely power? This would have gratified his ever-restless ambition; thereby he would mount the highest step of the ladder of fame, and achieve the most brilliant revenge for the wrong and disgrace which his country had heaped upon him. In every way, then, it was 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.' We see, perhaps, the reflection of his secret wishes and hopes in his formation of a body-guard of forty Suliots, who, however, proved so troublesome, that he was obliged to pay them off and send them to Missolonghi; but even while doing this, he displayed his usual kindness and liberality; for he gave them two months' pay, got their arms from Government, and paid the passage-money to their destination.

In his intercourse with the English Resident[2] at Cephalonia, Byron showed himself in his most amiable side, so that on personal acquaintance both parties were agreeably surprised with each other; he accepted even an invitation to a dinner given in his honour by the officers of the garrison. His manner was unusually gentle,

[1] *Recollections*, p. 284.

[2] [Described in Kennedy's *Conversations* as the Honourable Colonel D——, who commanded in the absence of the Governor, Colonel Napier.]

said to Trelawny.[1] 'Do people think I have no lucid intervals, that I came to Greece to scribble more nonsense? I will show them that I can do something better: I wish I had never written a line to have it cast in my teeth at every turn.' In earlier life he had shown more antiquarian interest in the plain of Troy. At Vathi, the chief place of the island, the poet was received with the greatest attention and hospitality by the English Resident, Captain Knox. A great number of Greeks, for the most part in the most pitiable condition, who had been banished from Scio, Patras, and other districts, had here sought refuge; for the relief of their distress Byron handed to the Resident the sum of 4,000 piastres. The party visited too an ancient monastery, which stood on the highest peak of the island. The ascent in the heat of the day was exceedingly fatiguing, and Byron, though he did not dismount from his mule, was jaded and irritable, having lost his mid-day siesta. It was evening before they reached the monastery. The Abbot, apprised by Captain Knox of the distinguished visitor, put on his sacerdotal vestments, and lining the approaches with his monks holding torches in their hands, welcomed Byron with hymns. The great hall was illuminated for the occasion, boys swung censers filled with frankincense, and the Abbot, after various ceremonies, began in the full consciousness of the dignity of his office a long address to the 'Lordo Inglese,' in which he greeted him as the liberator of his country; speaking as if he beheld in him not only the deliverer, but the future sovereign, of Greece. Byron, however, overcome by his extreme irritability, interrupted the solemnity, to the horror of the Abbot and his monks, by a torrent of Italian execrations, and seizing a torch rushed out of the hall. The Abbot meanwhile stood speechless with the draft of

[1] *Recollections*, p. 240.

union and order. At any rate he would await the relief of Missolonghi by the Greek fleet, and advanced the sum of 4,000*l.* towards the payment of the armament. He offered also a subsidy of one thousand dollars a month for Missolonghi; the Greek Government, however, would not agree to his terms and proposed to apply the money to other purposes. At last about the middle of November Byron prepared to depart; in two days he would set sail. It is probable that he was urged to this decision by the arrival from England of Colonel Leicester Stanhope[1] (afterwards the Earl of Harrington), a man of much decision of character and who displayed extraordinary interest and activity in the Greek cause; but again the day of departure was put off.

At length the long-expected Greek fleet, with Mavrocordato on board, arrived to relieve Missolonghi. Between Cephalonia and Ithaca it captured a Turkish corvette, with a considerable sum of money for the payment of the Turkish troops; the Greeks, too eager for action, violated on this occasion the neutrality of the Ionian Islands, by driving the corvette on shore on the coast of Ithaca. In consequence of this loss the Turkish fleet retired to the Gulf of Lepanto, while Mavrocordato was enthusiastically received by the inhabitants of Missolonghi, who had not forgotten his distinguished services there in the preceding year. He at once placed the brig 'Leonidas' at Byron's service, and, at the same time, the Greek Government besought him to act in concert with Mavrocordato in the organisation of the forces of Western Greece. Byron, on his part, informed the prince, that he was prepared to pay the sum of 4,000*l.* the private loan which he had promised to advance, and that he would himself

[1] He published a book entitled *Greece in* 1823 *and* 1824; *being a Series of Letters and other Documents on the Greek Revolution, &c.* London, 1825.

Gamba, was close to Missolonghi, they saw a ship of war making towards them under full sail, which to their dismay carried the Ottoman colours. Notwithstanding their neutral Ionian flag, Count Gamba considered it advisable to sink in the sea as quickly as possible the copies of correspondence which Byron had carried on with the Greek chiefs. The Turks approached and summoned the captain on board; and the vessel was compelled to accompany the frigate to Patras, where a Turkish fleet of fourteen sail lay at anchor. Brought before Jussuf Pacha, Count Gamba declared that he was a traveller, who had made an appointment to meet an English friend at Calamo, but that the darkness and the wind had driven him past it. The singular circumstance that the captain of his vessel suddenly recognised in the commander of the Turkish frigate the former master of a merchant vessel, whose life he had once saved in the Black Sea, contributed, however, more to his safety than this transparent evasion, and even than the presents which he made to the Pacha. In return for the gratitude of the Turkish captain to his old deliverer, Count Gamba promised to commend his courage to Jussuf Pacha in having ventured with his ship beyond the line of blockade, a commendation which he said would be worth much to him at Constantinople. Thus Count Gamba and his vessel were released, and on January 4, the bombard again got under weigh and made, not for Calamo but for Missolonghi, where on the same day it came to anchor in the roadstead.

Meanwhile Count Gamba, unable to ascertain anything of the fate of the mistico, had been far more disturbed about Byron's safety than about his own, and his apprehensions rose to the highest pitch, when on landing at Missolonghi he found that Byron had not yet arrived. His anxieties, however, were soon calmed, for on the fol-

and Byron, well pleased with a display so calculated to gratify his vanity, endured the oppressive oriental custom with an unusual amount of patience. All the chieftains of western Greece, from Arta to Salona, now assembled at Missolonghi, in order to complete the military organisation of the province. Mavrocordato was elected governor-general, and placed at the head of 5,000 armed men, who had there gathered together. To maintain and discipline these troops was the most immediate business, and here Byron, through the loan which he had advanced, could most effectively exert his influence. The fleet also had to be paid, nine Hydriot ships having already returned home, because their pay was not forthcoming. Following the example of the Greek chiefs, Byron formed also a brigade of his own: five hundred of the Suliotes, who after the death of Bozzaris were without a leader, he took into his own pay; the rest were paid by the Government, but placed under Byron's command. From the days of his pilgrimage the Suliotes had of all the Greek tribes been his favourites. Their wives also, with his approval, formed themselves into a corps—under the command of the wife of the tailor of the regiment—which was to accompany the brigade and attend to the nursing of the sick and wounded. These women—an exception in this to the general avidity—refused to take pay, requiring only free quarters and rations.

The state of affairs at this moment was by no means unfavourable to the Greeks. After the retirement of the Capudan Pacha from the east coast, and the Pacha of Scutari from Missolonghi, the whole Peloponnesus with the exception of certain strongholds of the Morea, Patras, Modon, and Coron, was in the hands of the Greeks, and another attack from the Turks was not to be expected during the winter. Bœotia, Attica, the Isthmus of Corinth,

daily at Missolonghi with a supply of the munitions of war, and who appeared to be the proper man to be placed at the head of the artillery force which was to be formed; and in order to improve the exercises and discipline of the troops, Byron and Stanhope invited the co-operation of the German Philhellenes scattered about in Greece, the remains, for the most part, of the free corps of General Normann. Byron, to whom the romantic side of the conflict had the greatest fascination, longed to select the most dangerous posts for himself, and filled those who surrounded him with the impression that he sought death. He insisted on undertaking the chief command of an expedition against Lepanto; his want of military knowledge and experience would, he hoped, be compensated by courage and energy; and in all matters demanding strategical direction, he proposed that he should be aided by the appointment of a staff. He reverted again and again to the powerful effect, which the example of personal courage and daring would exercise on the Greeks as on all semi-barbarous nations; his dexterity as a marksman had made a great impression on them, for the Greeks with their inferior weapons were bad marksmen. As artillerists the Turks were, however, worse than the Greeks, as Byron saw at Anatolico, to which, February 1, he made an excursion; a large house was there shown to him at which the Turks while besieging it were said to have fired 200 cannon-shots without once hitting it.

On February 5, after a long delay, Parry appeared with the military stores sent by the London Committee. Among these were two mountain howitzers and sixty-one casks of gunpowder, each containing 100 lbs: even horns

Trelawny, he brought himself by his habits of drinking to a lunatic asylum. Though he professes himself to be the author of *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, it is very evident that he contributed only the materials for the book.

partly from dissatisfaction arising from other causes, the projected undertaking against Lepanto became, for the present at least, impossible.

Disappointments and incessant vexations had hitherto been unable either to shake the purpose of Byron or crush his hopes. He endured them all with greater composure than might have been expected from him; from the first, he knew that he would find Greece no bed of roses. There were in fact irritations without end for him. At one time the town, after the departure of the Greek flotilla, was blockaded by Turkish vessels; at another it was seized with fear about the plague; afterwards it was thrown into panic fears by an earthquake; then, again, it was possessed with the dread of espionage and treason; and lastly, it was threatened with the brawling and lawlessness of the rival chiefs (specially of Cariascachi). With a temperament so irritable as Byron's this continued excitement and tension of mind necessarily exercised a most prejudicial influence. The damp unhealthy climate of the place, and his own irrational mode of living, acted still more injuriously on his health. His house stood close by the edge of a shallow muddy creek, from which arose the most unhealthy exhalations; and Missolonghi itself was surrounded by stagnant marshy waters. The town was exceedingly dirty, and the mud lay so deep in the gateway, that Count Gamba thought,[1] 'that even were it left unguarded, the enemy would have had some difficulty in forcing a passage.' Missolonghi was, in one word, a perfect hot-bed of fever, to which, moreover, Byron was predisposed. In addition to this, the rainy weather confined him to the house, and made exercise in the open air, so indispensable for him, impossible. Under these circum-

[1] *Narrative*, p. 113.

in a letter written[1] from thence, April 17, to leave Missolonghi, as the state of his health could not bear its pestilential atmosphere and its incessant cares. 'Once more,' he concluded, 'I implore you to quit Missolonghi, and not to sacrifice your health and perhaps your life in that bog.' It was, however, too late; when this letter, which had been sent through Trelawny, reached its destination, the worst he feared had already happened.

Although Byron felt by no means well, but complained of frequent dizziness, headache, and nervous excitability, he again resumed his usual activity. It now seemed as if things would take a more favourable turn for Greece. Enthusiastic friends of the Greek cause from all parts of Europe almost daily arrived to offer their services. The prospects of the successful negotiation of the English loan became brighter; the news indeed of its conclusion was the last which Byron received before his death. Accounts from the Morea, and especially from the Greek Government itself, represented the intestine dissensions as becoming extinct, and Odysseus, a chief of great influence, at the head of three or four thousand men, and whose right hand was Trelawny, invited Mavrocordato and Byron to a conference Salona, to accompanying his invitation with a petition for powder, artillery, and Congreve rockets. Though neither artillery nor rockets could be promised, but only a small supply of powder, the proposed meeting was heartily agreed to, and Mavrocordato and Byron fixed on the middle of March for their departure to Salona.

Meanwhile Byron's house continued to be the headquarters and the central point of all the efforts to

[1] Trelawny's *Recollections*, p. 230.

an interest, and even the gravity of the state of affairs, could not restrain him from playing practical jokes at the expense of others. His special butt was Parry, whom he had made paymaster, and whom he generally addressed as 'old boy.' Thus, for example, Parry having an immoderate dread of earthquakes, Byron caused a barrel with some cannon-balls inside to be rolled in the room above, and ordered a number of Suliotes, at a given signal, to catch hold of the rafters and jump on the floor with all their might, so as to shake the building.[1] Again, opposite his quarters there stood a house, occupied chiefly by women, with little turrets, on the top of which were a number of small ornaments. These ornaments he shot down one after the other with his pistols, and great was his amusement when the terrified women rushed to the windows and 'scolded him vehemently in the Greek language, proving, as he said, that it had not lost any of its Billingsgate since the time of Homer's heroes.'[2] He had now among his servants a negro, whom he had persuaded Trelawny to give up to him during the voyage from Italy, knowing that a black servant is regarded, in Greece as in the East, as a mark of dignity.[3] This negro, according to Byron's express command, always addressed him as 'Massa,' and he and Tita accompanied him as 'chasseurs' in all his rides.[4] Amid these occupations and amusements he appears to have found neither time for, nor pleasure in, literature or poetry; in his travelling baggage, great in bulk and various in its contents, books had always formed a very subordinate item.[5] The Countess Guiccioli,[6] however, would have us believe, that

[1] Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 205. Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 153.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 155.

[3] Trelawny's *Recollections*, p. 212.

[4] Parry, p. 157.

[5] [Yet he read incessantly and remembered all he read!]

[6] English edition, vol. i. Introd. pp. 20, 40.

of the Greeks, and having served in India in early life, he wished to treat them after the principles he had learnt there. He bluntly recommended the Committee to take counsel from Anglo-Indians as to the way in which things should be managed in Greece. At the same time he was an enthusiastic admirer of Jeremy Bentham, and with Bentham upheld the principle of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' as the aim and end which the State and Society should pursue. To carry out his principle in Greece he desired above all things to employ the agency of a free press, and to institute schools, hospitals, post-offices, &c.,—institutions all of them in themselves of the highest utility, but undeniably rather unsuitable for the soil of Greece as it was then. To hospitals, medical dispensaries, and post-offices no objection could be raised; but what would the Press be to a people who could not read? What advantage would even schools be, as long as old and young were bearing arms, and not a single quiet well-ordered household was to be found throughout the whole country? Still more out of place was the agency of religious missions, which both Colonel Stanhope and Dr. Kennedy favoured. With Parry there had arrived a converted blacksmith, bringing with him a cargo of tracts and Bibles in modern Greek, who received from an English Missionary Association the magnificent salary of 20*l.* per annum, to propagate Christianity, i.e. Wesleyanism, among Greeks and Turks indifferently. Such a proceeding served of course only to irritate the Greek clergy, who exercised a considerable influence over the people, and to a political to add a religious contest. Of these plans and ideas Mavrocordato and Byron were the decided opponents, although they were obliged in some respects to countenance the attempts which were made to carry them out; all their efforts were vain to induce Stanhope to

The journal would, moreover, represent not so much the views of the Greeks as the views of their foreign friends, and having the field all to itself—there being no room for another—would propagate its own views without the correction of those of an opposite tendency. 'It is odd,' said Byron to Gamba,[1] 'that Stanhope, the soldier, is all for writing down the Turks; and I, the writer, am all for fighting them down.' The brigade of the author would be ready—so he said[2] on another occasion—before the printing press of the soldier. They mutually reproached each other with radicalism and with despotism; but notwithstanding their disagreements, Byron always entertained for Stanhope a high personal respect. 'When parting from him one evening, after a discussion of this kind, Lord Byron went up to him and exclaimed, "Give me that honest right hand;" and on another occasion he said to Stanhope, "Judge me by my actions, not by my words."'[3] Both Byron and Mavrocordato were glad at last when Stanhope went to Athens, where he joined the republican party. Odysseus, by establishing two schools, and by setting up his presses, at which two journals were printed, the 'Athens Free Press' and the 'Ami des Lois,' won the Colonel over to this step.

From what has been said, it follows that a great change had come over Byron's political opinions, for which his friends and political associates could not have been prepared. From a Carbonaro he had become a practical politician. He saw that the conflict of Carbonarism against existing governments could not be transplanted into Greece, if its independence were to be achieved by its people and recognised among the great powers. He who had lived to see the miserable wreck of that asso-

[1] Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 138.
[2] Moore's *Life*, vi. 158.
[3] Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 140.

ciation, could he entertain greater hopes of the Greek Hetairia? He rushed, therefore, to the opposite extreme, and endeavoured above all things to obtain the active sympathy of the governments of Europe. If a monarchy and, especially a foreign king were the desired issue of the struggle, this was undoubtedly the surest road; the final result at least was Byron's justification. According to his opinion the Greeks must not incur the displeasure of England, for England had not yet recognised Greece as a belligerent power, but merely regarded it as a country in a state of revolt. Moreover, the Ionian Isles were indispensable to the Greeks for the export of their cattle and for the importation of all their other necessaries; hence Byron utterly disapproved of the violent declamations, which Stanhope continually poured out against the government of these islands, though he knew it to be worthless and demanding a thorough reform. He regarded the Greek revolt, not as a struggle of radicalism and democracy against absolutism and the Holy Alliance, but as the struggle of Christian civilisation against Turkish oppression, and as the effort to attain a position in the political world, worthy of their ancestors, for the descendants of the most remarkable of the civilised nations of antiquity. This was, indeed, a change of opinion so great and marked, as scarcely to permit us to doubt, that constituted as Byron was, he must have been guided by motives which he never explicitly expressed. It is more than probable, that conferences of a confidential character were held at Missolonghi on this most secret point. 'I have had offers that would surprise you'—he said to Parry[1]—'were I to tell you of them, and which would turn the head of any man less satiated than I am, and more

[1] *The Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 179.

desirous of possessing power than of contributing to freedom and happiness.' Parry thought himself obliged to defend his patron against such plans of vulgar ambition which were even then openly discussed in the English press: all the offers made to Byron had been, he says, rejected.

Byron's views on the political regeneration of the country—according to the account which Parry gives[1]——were of an extremely practical character. They bear witness to his clear perceptions and sound judgment on all its external and internal relations, and only when he comes to speak of the ultimate results are his notions at all coloured by idealism. At the same time it may remain a question, how far the statements of Parry are authentic and trustworthy, and how far, also, Byron was in earnest in the statement and explanation of his views to him. Byron never committed the mistake of imagining, either that there was a Greece with a strongly defined boundary, or a distinct Greek nationality. The sole common bond existing among the different tribes was, he saw, their hatred of the Turks, in which hatred he by no means shared; rather he held the Turks to be as good as the Greeks, and objected to hear them called barbarians.[2]

[1] Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 170, *et seqq.*

[2] In order to introduce a more civilised mode of warfare, he twice obtained from the Greek authorities the release of some Turkish prisoners, whom he afterwards sent at his own expense to the Turkish commander of Patras and Prevesa with letters earnestly recommending to them a return of the same humanity towards their Greek captives. Among the Turkish prisoners there was a little girl of nine years old, Hato or Hatagée, belonging to a family of good worldly circumstances previous to the revolution, who with her mother had lived for three years at Missolonghi dependent on the kind treatment of the people there. Her father was serving with Jusuf Pacha, her brothers had all gone to the war, and as she and her mother showed little inclination to be sent back to Prevesa, Byron, charmed with the oriental beauty of the little girl, determined to have her educated at his own charge. He had

He distinguished between the wily, money-making Greek of the islands, the debased population of the towns on the continent, and the hardy and vigorous Greek peasantry. In the latter should—according to his view—the political centre of gravity be placed. He considered a federation the most suitable form of government, a federation having been once in ancient times the constitution of Greece. At the head of it he would place a President, who should be chosen by the Morea, the Islands, and Western Greece. The English form of government he thought utterly unsuited to Greece; he preferred for her the constitution of the United States. He had great expectations from America; his exertions for the liberation of Greece would be crowned, he thought, if he were sent as an ambassador of the Greeks to America, and should succeed in obtaining the recognition of Greece as an independent country. This would, as a matter of course, be followed by recognition on the part of England, and the safety of Greece then would in every way be secured. But first and foremost, the enemy must be driven from the soil of Greece, and a united government be established. It was settled, that the advances which Byron had made should be re-imbursed from the loan which was to be raised in England. He would thus have a sufficient sum in hand to undertake, with his well-armed and well-disciplined brigade, the long projected attack against Lepanto, and he had no doubt, that not only Lepanto but Patras also would fall into his hands: thus would the Morea be gained, and with it the possibility of offensive operations. Byron's further hopes for the new State, if, indeed, we may trust the account of Parry, resolve themselves into mere dreams. Thus, Crete, he imagined,

even some romantic thoughts of sending her to England as a companion to Ada.

in order to achieve her independence of Turkish rule, would become an integral part of it. Regenerated Greece would then expand in the same measure as Turkey decayed; the numerous tribes in Asia allied to Greece by language and religion would gradually join the new State, would spread civilisation over the ancient empire of Cyrus and Xerxes, and at last reach out its hand on the borders of Hindostan to that nation, which had been the first to assist it in the work of its liberation.

The state of Byron's health was far from being equal to the execution of his plans; on the contrary it excited great apprehension. He complained of weakness and dizziness and of frequent spasms in the chest. His departure for Salona, which had been fixed for March 27, was postponed partly on this account, partly from the state of the roads, which had been rendered impassable by the incessant fall of rain. On March 30, the freedom of the city of Missolonghi was conferred upon him, in grateful recognition of his distinguished services. He received April 9, a letter from his sister with favourable accounts of her own and of Ada's health. Pleased and excited with this news, he rode out with Gamba and his body-guard of Suliotes; he had been prevented for some days from taking exercise by unfavourable weather. They were overtaken by a heavy shower of rain, and returned to the walls thoroughly wet and in a state of violent perspiration. At the gate of the city, Byron dismounted as usual and insisted on getting into his boat, in order to avoid the ride through the dirty streets, in spite of Gamba's entreaties to take care, and his warnings against catching cold. 'I should make a pretty soldier, indeed, if I were to care for such a trifle.'[1] Two hours after his return home, Byron was

[1] Moore's *Life*, vi. 200.

seized with shivering and rheumatic pains, and at eight o'clock of that same evening he said to Gamba, as he entered his room: 'I suffer a great deal of pain; I don't care for death, but these agonies I cannot bear.'[1] 'On the following day he rose at his accustomed hour—transacted business and was even able to take his ride in the olive woods, accompanied, as usual, by his long train of Suliotes. He complained, however, of perpetual shudderings, and had no appetite . . . . This was the last time he ever crossed the threshold alive.'[2] 'On the evening of the 11th, his fever, which was pronounced to be rheumatic, increased; on the 12th he never left his bed, and on the two following days, though the fever appeared diminished, he became still more weak, and suffered much from pains in the head. Far from having any presentiment of his death, he spoke rather as if satisfied with the turn in his malady, since the fever, according to his belief, would cure him of his tendency to the dreaded epilepsy. The physicians also did not at first perceive the whole gravity of the attack, and the faithful Fletcher appears to have been the first who foreboded danger, and implored, therefore, his master to allow Dr. Thomas to be sent for from Zante. No vessel, however, could venture from the harbour on account of a dreadful hurricane. Dr. Bruno had, on the 14th, declared bleeding to be absolutely necessary, an opinion in which Millingen — a Swiss, Byron's staff-physician—who was now called in, concurred. This Byron most pertinaciously refused: the doctors might do with him what they liked, only they should not bleed him: he had promised his mother never to allow himself to be bled; 'besides, is it not,' he asked, 'asserted by Dr. Reid in his essays, that less slaughter is effected by the lance than by the lancet, that

[1] Moore's *Life*, vi. 201. [2] *Ibid.* p. 202.

minute instrument of mighty mischief?' 'Do with me,' he said to Millingen, 'whatever else you like, but bleed me you shall not.'[1] Notwithstanding this, Millingen—in whom Byron seems to have placed greater confidence than in the inexperienced Bruno—so persevered in his representations of the necessity of bleeding, that Byron at length yielded, and casting at both the medical men the fiercest glance of vexation, he threw out his arm and said in the angriest tone: 'There—you are, I see, a d——d set of butchers—take away as much blood as you like, but have done with it.'[2] Twenty ounces were immediately drawn: this was on April 16. The result did not correspond with the hopes which had been formed; the restlessness of the sufferer increased, and he began to wander in his mind. Next day he was again bled twice, the signs of inflammation of the brain increasing hourly: on both occasions Byron fainted. In addition to the bleeding it was deemed expedient to apply blisters to the soles of his feet: the sick man asked whether it would answer the purpose to apply both on the same leg; Millingen, immediately understanding the meaning of the question, calmed him by telling him that he would place them above his knees.'[3] The following day was Easter-day, which the Greeks were wont to celebrate by salvoes of artillery and volleys of musketry in the streets. Not to disturb the sick man by this noise, Parry marched with Byron's brigade and a crowd of the curious out of the city, and there made them discharge their arms, while the town-guards patrolled the streets and prayed the people to make as little noise as possible out of regard to the dangerous condition of their benefactor. About three o'clock in the afternoon Byron was able to rise from bed and was led into the next room,

[1] Moore's *Life*, vi. 203. [2] *Ibid.* p. 206. [3] *Ibid.* p. 207.

where he sat down and even attempted to read; but after a few minutes, he had to be conducted back to his bed again. The physicians, now thoroughly alarmed, expressed a wish to call in two other medical men—Dr. Freiber, the physician of the artillery-corps, and Luca Vaya, the physician of Mavrocordato—to a consultation. Byron only consented when it was told him, that it was the wish of Mavrocordato, but with the express condition, 'Let them look at me but say nothing.' When one of them having felt his pulse was about to ask a question or make a remark, Byron cut him short with the expression: 'Recollect your promise and go away.'[1]

The feeling of his approaching end now came over the sick man. Count Gamba, young and inexperienced, and the tender-hearted Fletcher, burst into tears and were obliged to leave the room. Tita also, who had been in Greece Byron's most useful and favourite servant, wept and averted his face, but could not retire as Byron kept hold of his hand. He looked at him steadily, and said, half smiling, in Italian, 'Oh, questa è una bella scena!' He then exclaimed, 'Call Parry,'—who was the coolest and most self-possessed in the household. He then became delirious, and called out, half in English half in Italian, 'Forwards—forwards — courage! follow my example—don't be afraid.'[2] Becoming a little calmer he endeavoured to make Fletcher understand his last wishes. Fletcher begged to be allowed to bring writing materials to take down his words. 'No,' interrupted Byron, 'there is no time; mind you execute my orders. Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her and say——' Here his voice faltered and became indistinct, and only a few names, Augusta — Ada —

[1] Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 260.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 261.

Hobhouse—Kinnaird—could be distinguished. 'Now I have told you all,' he said. 'My Lord,' replied Fletcher, 'I have not understood a word your Lordship has been saying.' 'Not understand me?' said Byron with a look of deep distress. 'What a pity then! it is too late—all is over.' 'I hope not,' murmured Fletcher, 'but the Lord's will be done.' 'Yes,' continued Byron, 'yes, not mine.' He then tried to utter a few words, of which none were intelligible except 'My sister—my child.'

The opinions of the physicians were as usual divided. Contrary to the view of Dr. Bruno, who saw safety only in bleeding, a strong decoction of bark with opium was prescribed. Parry, who by his resolute and sturdy character had gained great influence over Byron, had to administer to him some spoonfuls of it. Sleep, the long-desired sleep, was now produced, but death also perhaps was accelerated. After the sleep of half an hour the sick man awoke. Count Gamba, who could no longer be present at the sad scene, relates that Byron could be understood to say, 'Poor Greece! poor town! my poor servants! why was I not aware of this sooner? My hour is come. I do not care for death, but why did I not go home before I came here? Io lascio qualche cosa di caro nel mondo. For the rest, I am content to die.' He spoke of Greece also, saying, 'I have given her my time, my means, my health,—and now I give her my life. What could I do more?'[2] These expressions, however, rest on very imperfect authority, and it could not be otherwise, if the terrible confusion be considered which reigned in the chamber of the now dying man, and through the whole house. Many conveniences were utterly wanting; while there was no lack of will to help, the absence of plan or

[1] Moore's *Life*, vi. 210. [2] *Ibid.* p. 211-12.

method was the more felt. No one knew rightly what was to be done, and no one had the capacity to undertake the management. Above all, the nursing care of woman was wanting; for as man at the beginning of life cannot dispense with woman's care, neither can he dispense with it when life draws to its close. To add to all this there was a true Babel of tongues. Dr. Bruno in his agitation and anxiety spoke English still more unintelligibly than before. Fletcher's Italian was not better. Parry understood nothing but English,—Tita nothing but Italian, and the Romaic of the Greek servants was understood by none, as they on the other hand understood nobody. Towards evening Byron said: 'Now I will go to sleep,' and disposed himself to that slumber from which he never woke. He lay for four and twenty hours without motion; occasional symptoms of suffocation were seen, accompanied by rattling in the throat, which induced those that watched by the bed now and then to raise his head; and so he continued till six o'clock in the evening of April 19, when, during a terrible thunderstorm, he opened his eyes and then again immediately closed them. The physicians felt his pulse—Byron was no more.

Not only Byron's friends and servants, but all Missolonghi, were stunned by the sudden blow which had fallen upon them. Mavrocordato wept, and even the inhabitants with difficulty restrained their tears. On the very day of his death, Mavrocordato in the name of the Provisional Government, proclaiming to the country its loss, decreed that 'the seven and thirty funeral shots,' which Wilhelm Müller[1] in his Lays of Greece has so beautifully

[1] [Father of Professor Max Müller, who in the third volume of his *Chips from a German Workshop*, republishes in a translation the beautiful sketch of his father's life, which he prefixed to the German edition of his father's poems.]

commemorated, should be fired from the grand battery;[1] that all the public offices, even the courts of justice, all the shops except those in which provisions and medicines are sold, should remain closed for three days; that every species of public amusement and all demonstrations of festivity at Easter should be suspended; that a general mourning for one and twenty days should be observed; and that in all churches prayers and a funeral service should be offered up. These were honours such as are observed towards princes, and display even an excess of gratitude. The funeral shots, which 'thundered to the world' from the walls of Missolonghi, were heard even at Patras, where the Turkish garrison, quickly learning their intent, announced their joy at the great liberator's death by volleys of musketry. The cannon having ceased to fire, a silence like the grave lay over the whole city, as if it had the presentiment that the death of Byron were the precursor of its own fall. Meanwhile in Byron's house, his friends Gamba, Parry, and two representatives of Mavrocordato were engaged in taking an inventory of his effects, and sealing his papers. The body was opened by the medical men, and afterwards embalmed.[2] As lead

[1] The decree of the Provisional Government is given in the original in the Appendix to Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 524.

[2] The report of the *post mortem* examination, signed by Bruno and the other medical men, is given in Count Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 271 (note), and also in the Appendix to Medwin's *Conversations*. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than this report, from which only one particular merits special notice—namely, that the brain was in a high state of inflammation. Fletcher's 'Account of Lord Byron's last Moments,' which appeared originally in the *Westminster Review* together with Dr. Bruno's remarks upon it, is to be found in the Appendix to Medwin. Fletcher's account can make no claim to perfect accuracy, for he was not always present in the chamber of death, and was besides far too much affected and confused to be a true observer or relater. Altogether the accounts of the particulars of Byron's illness and death-scene are very contradictory.

by crowds, who came to take their farewell look of the friend and deliverer of their country. In the evening of the 23rd, the bier was privately carried back to his own house by his own officers; and on the 29th the coffin was closed. When the news of his death arrived at Zante, the first physicians of the island, Dr. Thomas at their head, were in the act of embarking for Missolonghi. The English Resident forthwith despatched a vessel to bring away the remains, his household, and effects. On the morning of the 2nd of May the embarkation took place amid the minute guns of the fortress; and on the evening of the 4th, the vessel cast anchor in the harbour of Zante. Two days after Byron's death the brig 'Florida' had arrived in the same harbour with the first instalment of the loan under the charge of Captain Blaquiere. She was now chartered to convey his mortal remains to his native land. Colonel Stanhope, on his arrival from the Morea, took charge of the ship and its precious charge, and on May the 25th the 'Florida' weighed anchor and sailed for England.

The news of Byron's death arrived in London on May the 14th, and soon spread over the civilised world. That Byron had been snatched away in the very flower of his manhood excited universal grief and lamentation. He had just attained his thirty-seventh year, a period in man's life which seems an ominous one for men of great genius. Alexander the Great did not attain even that age; Raphael and Mozart died at the same age as Byron—which was fatal to other remarkable, if less conspicuous men of genius—to Burns, Platen, Weber, Mendelssohn. It is very natural that contemporaries should feel most acutely a death so sudden and premature; but posterity judges more coldly and therefore more truly. Byron had attained his culminating point and a longer life would

probably have added little to his fame, either in the field of poetry or politics; on the contrary prolonged life might have detracted from it in both. As a poet, Byron had done the utmost he was capable of; he had entered on that period of life in which the lyrical faculty naturally tends to decay; as a dramatist he would never have carried off the palm; and if he had continued 'Don Juan' or 'Childe Harold,' he would have found it impossible to give the finish and completeness, which art demands, to poems, so utterly wanting, as these are, in consistency of idea and plan, or to make them more perfect, than they already were. He might have added to the quantity, hardly to the quality of these works. With regard to Greece, Byron's early death was undoubtedly at first a severe loss: his name and influence had helped the Greeks to procure that pecuniary aid which they so urgently needed, and at his death several of the richer Philhellenes withdrew the sums which they were about to dedicate to the Greek cause.[1] But if we survey the course of the war of liberation, it appears very questionable, whether Byron would have been able to bring to a triumphant close the work he had taken on himself, surrounded, as it was, with ever-increasing difficulties. He was neither a soldier nor a politician; he was wanting in those qualities of mind and character, which were required in the sphere in which he was placed—in patience, in perseverance, in rapid yet cautious and consistent action, in equanimity, not to say coolness, in political calculation, and lastly, in unconsciousness of self. Although the plan which floated before him was not wanting in practical feasibility, yet rivals, apparently more energetic than himself, had different views from his on the schemes which he wished to carry out, and it is

[1] Gamba's *Narrative*, p. 282 (note).

doubtful who, in this conflict of proposals, would have proved the victor.[1] The union and harmony he passionately longed for were not to be so quickly achieved, and military successes were, as events showed, by no means so certain as Byron imagined. Even if his life had been prolonged, it is far from certain, that he would have added political renown to his name, or achieved favourable issues for Greece. It has already been hinted, that Byron appeared to wish to die; and for him, without question, the noblest fate would have been that he should have found death, not on a sick bed, but in storming Lepanto, with the banner of Greece in his hand. Burial on the soil of Greece, in the Temple of Theseus, as the Greek chiefs desired, or by the side of Marco Bozzaris in the church of Missolonghi, or on the field of Marathon, would then have been justified. As matters, however, were, we cannot but think, that he fell a victim to his insensate fashion of living rather than to Greece, and that his interment in the land of his birth appears the more fitting termination, especially as it was his last, although not his earliest, wish, that he should be buried in England.

On the arrival of the 'Florida' on July 1, in the Downs, Hobhouse and Hanson, the executors of Byron's will, received the corpse and conveyed it to the house of Sir Edward Knatchbull in Great George Street, Westminster, where, on the 9th and 10th of the month, it lay in state. To restrain the passionate eagerness of the public, admission to see the body was granted only by cards. Friends who knew him well, found, it is said, no great alteration of the countenance in death, except in

[1] Trelawny, who regarded Byron as a tool in the hands of the crafty Mavrocordato, sought to free him from this, according to his (Trelawny's) mind, unworthy position, and to bring him over to the side and party of Odysseus, and install him at the Acropolis.

procession proceeded through the streets of London, a fine-looking honest tar was observed to walk near the hearse uncovered throughout the morning; and on being asked by a stranger whether he formed part of the funeral *cortége*, he replied that he came there to pay his respects to the deceased, with whom he had served in the Levant, when he made the tour of the Grecian islands. This poor fellow was kindly offered a place by some of the servants who were behind the carriage, but he said he was strong and had rather walk near the hearse.'[1] In the suburb of Kentish Town, the procession passed by a modest house, at the windows of which stood the widows of Shelley and Captain Williams, who lived there. 'What should I have said to a Cassandra, who, three years ago, should have prophesied that Jane and I—Williams and Shelley gone—should watch the funeral procession of Lord Byron up Highgate Hill? All changes of romance or drama lag far behind this!'[2] As the hearse proceeded to Nottingham, it passed by a certain park, and a gentleman and lady riding therein on horseback, enquired whose funeral it was? The answer was followed by sad consequences. The lady immediately fainted and was carried home insensible, where she became seriously ill. The lady was Lady Caroline Lamb, and the gentleman, riding with her, her husband. This incident exceeds even modern sensational fiction, but is nevertheless true.[3]

In the afternoon of July 16—it was a Friday, a day which Byron all his life regarded as an unlucky one—the body was deposited in the family vault in the small village church of Hucknall-Torkard; and there it rests near the body of the mother who preceded him and of

[1] Parry's *Narrative*, p. 149.
[2] Garnett's *Relics of Shelley*. London, 1862. p. 134.
[3] *Annual Biography for the Year* 1829, p. 57.

the daughter who followed him. Lady Byron, separated from her husband in life, is separated even in her grave; her body found a resting place elsewhere. Over the vault, on the wall of the church, Mrs. Leigh—not Lady Byron—caused a marble tablet to be erected with the following inscription: *In the vault beneath, where many of his ancestors and his mother are buried, lie the remains of George Gordon Noel Byron, Lord Byron of Rochdale in the county of Lancaster, the author of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.' He was born in London on the 22nd of January,* 1788. *He died at Missolonghi in Western Greece, on the 19th of April,* 1824, *engaged in the glorious attempt to restore that country to her ancient freedom and renown. His sister, the Honourable Augusta Maria Leigh, placed this Tablet to his memory.*

One of the first pilgrims to the grave was the faithful Count Gamba, who is said[1] to have been much struck with the resemblance of Hucknall-Torkard to Missolonghi. The Countess Guiccioli also, at a later period, made a pilgrimage to the grave of her lover. This lady—to add a few words concerning her life subsequent to Byron's death—left Genoa to join her father, a few days after Byron's departure for Greece. Her family, a short time before Byron's expedition, had been banished from the kingdom of Sardinia, and she could not now leave her father, as, after the confiscation of his estates,[2] he depended for his support chiefly on the annuity she received from her husband, Count Guiccioli. This probably was one of the reasons why she could not follow Byron to Greece. It has been made a reproach to him, and been cited as a proof of

[1] See Moore's *Life*, vi. 223.

[2] [Hobhouse, in the article of the *Westminster Review*, already several times quoted, denies this: 'their possessions (i.e. of the Counts Gamba) were not confiscated,' p. 23.]

his want of generosity, that he made no provision for her during his life or after his death by will, although she had sacrificed for him her whole worldly prosperity. He had, indeed, offered to leave her a legacy of 10,000*l.*, an offer which she declined, as she had declined all presents from him. In her, such conduct was noble and shows the finest feeling: in him it was otherwise. He should have made the necessary provision without consulting her; for to his proposal what could she give but a refusal? Whither she and her family repaired, when they left Genoa, we know not. After Byron's death, the Countess is said to have been re-united to her husband. The winter of 1832–33 she spent with her brother Pietro in England, where society shrugged its shoulders at her, and neglected her; it is said that even the door of Newstead was closed to her. In 1851 she was married to the Marquis de Boissy (1798–1866), peer of France under Louis Philippe, and senator under the second Empire. This alliance seems to us inexplicable, as her recently published work on Byron shows, how with every fibre of her heart she is still devoted to the lover of her youth. Nothing would have so well become her as a life of dignified retirement. Had the Marquis been an intimate friend or admirer of Byron, she might have pleaded this as some extenuation for marriage with him. But he never knew Byron, and though he imitated the English in his domestic arrangements, he displayed in his public life an unseemly and often ludicrous hatred of the English nation. Rumour affects to know, that he often introduced his wife with these words: 'Madame la Marquise de Boissy, ma femme, ci-devant maîtresse de Lord Byron.'[1] Her work on Byron, however good her intentions may be,

[1] *Athenæum*, Oct. 9, 1869, p. 465.

possesses no value. The best service she can render to her lover and to the world, if she would not incur the same reproach which attaches to Moore, would be to take steps for the publication of Byron's correspondence with herself, and of the letters of her brother Pietro written while he was in Greece.

Byron, as early as 1815, had directed by his will, that his property of Rochdale in Lancashire should be sold, and that the proceeds, together with the sum realised from the sale of Newstead, after deduction of the money secured to his wife by the marriage settlements, should devolve on his sister Mrs. Leigh and her children, as a property to be held independently of her husband. He at the same time expressly declared, that he made this provision for his sister and her children, because his wife and any children he might have—Ada was not yet born—were otherwise amply provided for. His care and consideration for Mrs. Leigh were rendered the more necessary by her husband's unfortunate or prodigal mismanagement of his affairs, and consequent loss of the greater portion of his property. It does not appear, however, as if Byron's purpose had been attained by this legacy, for Mrs. Leigh seems to have needed, as she advanced in life, a royal pension.

Lady Byron, after the death of her husband, gave herself up more and more to her pietistic tendencies: she occupied herself continually with theological questions, sought especially the society of the clergy, and patronised the efforts of the Home Mission. In the year 1854 she established at Bristol a Reformatory for young girls.[1]

[1] A memorial tablet placed on this house commemorates her virtues thus: 'Sacred to the Memory of Anne Isabella Noel, Dowager Lady Byron, who, ever devoting the many talents entrusted to her to the service of her Master, purchased these premises in September 1854, for

But with all this, her heart remained cold and stern, lacking the softness and gentleness of true womanhood. Artificial and dogmatic piety had altogether supplanted the natural devoutness of her character. This was seen pre-eminently in the education of Ada, 'sole daughter of my house and heart.' In accordance with the heartless and tyrannical directions of her grandmother, Ada was kept in entire ignorance of her father. By the directions of Lady Noel's will, Ada was not to see the portrait of her father, till she had attained her twenty-first year;[1] her executors were strictly directed to keep it, till then, carefully concealed; and in the event of her attaining that age while Lady Byron was still living, even so Ada was not to receive the portrait. The handwriting of her father, Lady Lovelace learnt to know only in later years through Mr. Murray,[2] and till within a short period before her death she knew nothing of his works. That such conduct on the part of the mother should fail to produce those feelings so becoming in a daughter, is very conceivable, and various indications seem to attest, that the relations between mother and daughter were not always the most tender and undisturbed. Of the way in which Ada became acquainted with the poetry of her father, the Countess Guiccioli[3] gives the following

the purpose of rescuing young girls from sin and misery, and bringing them back to the paths of holiness. She was born May 17, 1792, and departed this life May 16, 1860, faithful unto death.'

[1] ['It is singular, that in the same year that Lady Noel leaves by will an interdiction for my daughter to see her father's portrait for many years, the individuals of a nation (Americans of the United States) not remarkable for their liking to the English in particular, nor for flattering men in general, request me to sit for my "pourtraicture," as Baron Bradwardine calls it.'—Byron in a letter to Mr. Murray, May 26, 1822. Moore's *Life*, v. 336.]

[2] [Not the father, but the son, who delighted Lady Lovelace by giving her the MS. of 'Beppo.']

[3] *Recollections of Lord Byron*, i. 306. English Trans.

account, tinged, it must be admitted, with the hues of romance. Colonel Wildman, who had become acquainted with Lady Lovelace in London, invited her to Newstead, an invitation which she accepted about a year and a quarter before her death. One day in the library of Newstead, the Colonel read to her some verses, with the beauty of which she was enchanted: when she asked him who was the author, the Colonel answered by pointing to the portrait of her father by Phillips hanging on the wall. She was stunned by the discovery, and from that moment a revolution took place in her feelings towards her father. Shutting herself up in the rooms her father had occupied, she devoted herself to the study of his works, and learnt from them that love for herself, which had hitherto been so carefully concealed from her. On her return to London, she became seriously ill, and feeling her end drawing near, she prayed the Colonel to allow her to be buried by her father's side in the church of Hucknall-Torkard, a request which was of course at once granted. She died November 27, 1852. Thus were fulfilled the words of the third canto of 'Childe Harold,' in which the poet, while lamenting the small measure of love he had known in life, spoke thus of his daughter:—

> Though the grave closed between us—'twere the same,
> I know that thou wilt love me.

On July 8, 1835, Ada was married to Earl Lovelace, who on the death of his mother-in-law in 1860 took the family name of Noel for himself and his descendants; of this marriage three children were born. The eldest, Byron Noel, Viscount Ockham (born May 12, 1836, died September 1, 1862), appears to have inherited all the eccentricity of the Byrons. A thorough radical in his

opinions, he mixed little with those of his own rank in life, but served as a common seaman, and then worked for some time as a ship-carpenter at Millwall. The second child was Anna Isabella Noel, who was married in August 1869 to Mr. Blunt. The youngest of the children, Ralph Gordon Noel Milbanke, is the present Lord Wentworth.

CHAPTER X.

CHARACTERISTICS.

TOWARDS the end of the fourth decade of this century there appeared a work on Byron's life and adventures, with the melodramatic title—borrowed from Lamartine[1]—'Lord Byron, Man, Angel, or Devil?' A title such as this, conceived in the worst taste, and expressed in language so strained and artificial, can only be explained by the load of exaggeration and fable, under which, whether for good or evil, Byron has lain beyond any other poet.[2]

[1] Lamartine's celebrated *Méditation*: *L'Homme. A Lord Byron*, begins with these verses:

'Toi, dont le monde encore ignore le vrai nom,
Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon.'

[2] At the head of these fables stands the story of the murder, which the poet was said to have committed at Florence, and to which even Goethe himself lent an ear, explaining from it the conception of 'Manfred.' Byron, so this story runs, had an *amour* with a married lady at Florence; that her husband discovered it and killed the faithless one, while he himself was found the same night in the street murdered, whereupon Byron fled from Florence. (Goethe's *Werke*, xxvi. 429. Stuttgart, 1858.) Other fabulous adventures are mentioned by Hunt (*Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, i. 234-240, 8vo. ed.). The descriptions of his adventures and travels, which he is said to have passed through, are mystifications of another kind; such for instance as: 'Narrative of Lord Byron's Voyage to Corsica and Sardinia, during the summer and autumn of 1821. Compiled from minutes made during the voyage by the passengers, with Extracts from the Journal of his Lordship's yacht, the Mazeppa, kept by Captain Benson, R.N., Commander. Paris, 1825.' Also: 'An Event in the Life of Lord Byron,' in Colborn's *New Monthly Magazine*, 1853; and some others. The spurious poems, as for instance: 'Lord Byron's Farewell to England,' with three other poems—

But quite apart from the manner in which it has been misrepresented by falsehood and sensational descriptions, his character has been judged in the most various and contradictory ways. What a divergence of views between the bitterness of Leigh Hunt on the one hand, and the idolatry of the Countess Guiccioli on the other, even in her old age, towards the lover of her youth? What a difference between the judgment of Moore, whose biography is a masterpiece of extenuation, and the harshness of Trelawny or of Galt? The reason of this may be found in the fact, that Byron presented a variety of sides to the minds of observers, and that his nature, as many coloured as the spectrum of the sun, showed a different hue, according to the medium and relations in which it was placed for the time, and the feelings and humours thereby educed. 'Nil fuit unquam sic impar sibi,' was Medwin's[1] opinion. 'He is never two days the same,' says the Countess of Blessington.[2] Byron was conscious of this, and even prided himself somewhat on it. 'I am,' he said to the lady just named, 'such a strange *mélange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me; one will represent me a sort of sublime misanthrope, with moments of kind feeling. This, *par exemple*, is my favourite *rôle*. Another will portray me as a modern Don Juan; and a third will, it is to be hoped, if only for opposition's sake, represent me as an amiable ill-used gentleman, more sinned against than sinning. Now if I know myself, I should say that I have

'Ode to St. Helena,' 'To my Daughter on her Birth-day,' and 'To the Lily of France.' London, 1816, and some other poems, form a third class of forgeries.

[1] *Conversations of Lord Byron*, by Thomas Medwin, ii. 136.

[2] *Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington.* London, 1834.

no character at all.'[1] 'With me'—so he says on another occasion—'there is but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous.'[2] These expressions betray, indeed, some self-knowledge; but he would have deceived himself, had he imagined there was anything sublime in his life or character; sublimity is found only in his poetry. If, therefore, the source whence traits so variable and contradictory proceeded—if the enduring element amid so much instability is to be discovered—we must, even at the risk of some repetition, pass in rapid survey the growth and formation of Byron's character.

Byron had received from nature various dangerous gifts; in the first place—that we may commence with those that are external—beauty. Not only women joined in the exclamation, 'O mon dieu qu'il est beau!' but even men could scarcely escape its influence. 'If you had seen Byron,' writes Coleridge in a letter to a friend,[3] 'you could scarcely disbelieve him—so beautiful a countenance I scarcely ever saw—his teeth so many stationary smiles—his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light and for light—and his forehead so ample and yet so flexible, passing from marble smoothness into a hundred wreaths and lines and dimples, correspondent to the feelings and sentiments he is uttering.' Quite in harmony with this is the description of the Countess Albrizzi.[4] She also dwells on the mobility of his countenance, over which all the movements of his inner man coursed, like the breath over a mirror. Even the calm and sober Scott[5] thought him beautiful as the vision of a dream; 'The prints,' he said, 'give one no impression of him.

[1] *Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington*, p. 389.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 319.
[3] *Life of S. T. Coleridge*, by James Gilman, vol. i. 1838.
[4] See Moore's *Life*, iv. 214–220.
[5] Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, v. 319–20. Edin. 1856.

A certain fair lady, whose name has been too often mentioned in connection with his, told a friend of mine, that when she saw Byron first, it was in a crowded room, and she did not know who it was, but her eyes were instantly nailed, and she said to herself, "that pale face is my fate."' Byron was slenderly and finely formed, five feet eight inches and a half in height, and very well proportioned. His small head, of perfect symmetry, rested on a long most shapely though muscular neck and broad shoulders. A feminine character betrayed itself unmistakably in his outer man. His head resembled the beardless Apollo; he had, in fact, little beard, and in Italy for the first time wore a thin moustache. His short curly locks, very unlike the straight hair characteristic of Englishmen, his large eyes, his long eyelashes, the transparent paleness of his cheeks, his full lips, are all rather feminine than masculine features.[1] The Sultan, when he saw him in the suite of the English ambassador, is said to have taken him for a woman in disguise, and Byron was possibly thinking of himself, when he makes his Don Juan appear in the harem disguised as a woman. That Ali Pacha admired his aristocratic small hands, has been already mentioned. His voice was soft and melodious—'d'une beauté phénomenale,' as the Countess Guiccioli says in her idolatry; the little son of Lord Holland, who did not know his name, described him 'as the gentleman with the beautiful voice.'[1] He was in all these respects so prodigally endowed by nature, that it might be said that she had almost left nothing to be done—but for that unhappy lameness, which involuntarily recalls the verse:

Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne.

From what cause this lameness proceeded, it is difficult

[1] Note, vol. i. p. 208. Engl. Trans.

to discover; and it is remarkable, how very much the accounts respecting a fact so simple and easy to be ascertained differ from each other; doubt even prevails as to which was the lame foot, or whether both were deformed. Byron, during his whole life, took the utmost pains to conceal both the lameness and its cause. According to the Countess Guiccioli, the widow of Colonel Wildman presented to the 'Naturalist Society of Nottingham,' among other relics of Byron, 'the lasts' on which his boots were made in Southwell;[1] and if we are to believe the accompanying testimony of the bootmaker, William Swift, Byron had not a club foot, as was so often asserted by his enemies with a tender allusion to the devil, but both feet were normally formed, only the left was an inch and a half shorter than the other; and the ankle joint was at the same time so weak, that the foot turned outwards. Byron when a boy wore therefore 'a piece of iron with a joint at the ankle,' at a later period 'a very light and thin boot, tightly laced just under the sole.' The calf of the leg was also weak. The Countess Guiccioli corroborates the statement, that the whole defect lay in the weakness of the ankle-bone, but is silent as to the shortness of the foot.[2] Trelawny's account[3] is very different. He saw Byron lying in his coffin; impelled by curiosity, he sent Fletcher, who was in the room, for a glass of water, and then uncovered the feet of the dead man. Then, he says, the mystery was solved; both feet were clubbed, and his legs withered to the knee. The right foot was the most distorted, and had been still further injured by the remedies applied in

[1] [The Countess is more correct here, than in many of her stories. 'The lasts' spoken of are preserved by this Society.]

[2] Countess Guiccioli. *Recollections of Lord Byron*, i. 72, 73 (English Edition, London, 1869).

[3] *Recollections of the Last Days of Byron, &c.*, pp. 224-228.

his childhood, especially by the steel splints. The right leg was also shorter, and the foot so twisted, that only the outer side touched the ground. Hence, he says, Byron's shoes were provided with high heels and the soles were on the inside very thick and on the outside very thin; the toes were stuffed with cotton wool. To conceal his feet he wore unusually long and wide trowsers. According to the same authority, he could not walk more than a few hundred yards, and never sat on the ground, as it would have been difficult for him to get up again.[1] He explains also Byron's life-long habit of fasting from these defects; his withered limbs would have been unable to bear a heavy body. Two things, however, are strange in this account; first, that Byron could walk at all without the help of a stick—and it is never mentioned that he used one: and, secondly, that Trelawny made this discovery only after Byron's death, though both had very often bathed together. Thus at Argostoli, Byron, on one occasion, stretching out his right leg towards Trelawny, said: 'I hope this accursed limb will be knocked off in the war.' To which Trelawny replied: 'that he would exchange legs, if he would give him a portion of his brains.'[2] How is it that with his seaman's eagle eye, he did not then see the club foot and the withered leg? One thing, however, seems certain: Byron all his life avoided walking, partly because, according to the express testimony of the Countess Guiccioli[3] and Consul Hoppner, it occasioned him suffering, partly because he feared to

[1] Parry, on the other hand, says, that Byron very often walked backwards and forwards in his apartment for hours together, and had the habit, while doing this, of turning round suddenly on his heel.—*The Last Days of Lord Byron*, pp. 259, 164.

[2] *Recollections*, p. 203. To the Marquis of Sligo, also, Byron once showed his deformed foot, while they were bathing (Moore's *Life*, i. 347).

[3] *Recollections*, i. 74.

attract people's attention. His awkward and constrained demeanour in society is also partially to be explained by his efforts to conceal his lameness. 'He entered a room,' says Trelawny,[1] 'with a sort of run, as if he could not stop, then planted his best leg well forward, throwing back his body to keep his balance;' or when he was sitting he put it uppermost and stroked it with his hand. These accounts are, however, contradicted or modified not only by the Countess Guiccioli,[2] but also by Galt[3] and Lady Blessington;[4] all of whom assert that the lameness was so little perceptible, that it could not clearly be distinguished which was the deformed foot.

Thus was Byron placed by nature between beauty and deformity, as between two poles, a position which was the determining cause of many of the inconsistencies of his character. Beauty was the source of his vanity, deformity of his bitterness. If the former led him into society, where it ensured him homage and success, the latter drove him to court solitude, in order to hide his defect from men's gaze. It would have required an education of pre-eminent excellence and a character of rare strength to harmonise these contrasts and reconcile the inward conflict engendered by them. But excellence of education and strength of character were denied to Byron; he became, therefore, the prey of vanity on the one hand, and of embittered feelings on the other, and these two main features of his character remained constant and unchangeable amid all the alternations of his feelings, and all the play of his capricious humours. Thus beauty and deformity laid the germs of egotism in his soul. Finding, that from these two causes he became an object, partly of

[1] Trelawny, p. 226.
[2] *Recollections*, i. 73.
[3] *Life of Lord Byron*, p. 23.
[4] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 3.

admiring, partly of sympathetic interest to the world, he acquired too much the habit of claiming its sympathy and its services as his due without any corresponding return on his part, and of constantly placing his own person with its perfections and its faults in the foreground. Thus his egotism grew up side by side with his vanity and bitterness, and whatever in the course of his life contributed to feed these, strengthened also the former.

In spite of the assertions of the Countess Guiccioli to the contrary, it is undeniable that his lameness was, all his life long, a thorn in the flesh to Byron, the more so as his mother, who, according to his own conviction, was its main cause, used to taunt him with it. 'His deformity,' says Trelawny,[1] 'was always uppermost in his thoughts and influenced every act of his life, spurred him on to poetry, as that was one of the few paths to fame open to him, and ultimately goaded him on to his last Quixotic crusade in Greece.' His bitterness was aggravated, too, by the belief, that a deformity like his reacted on the beauty of the countenance, by the expressions which soured and discontented thoughts impress on it.[2] To these Byron gave utterance, with all the force of his genius, in the 'Deformed Transformed,' a piece with which his mind, contrary to his wont, was occupied for several years. 'No action of Lord Byron's life,' says Mrs. Shelley,[3] with some exaggeration—'scarce a line he has written, but was influenced by his personal defect.'

Byron had early discovered how the beauty of his face and form fascinated all, women especially. His mother trained him from childhood to the consciousness of it. He knew that he was irresistible from his mere personal

[1] *Recollections, &c.*, p. 224.
[2] *Countess of Blessington's Conversations*, p. 120.
[3] Note to the 'Deformed Transformed.' *Byron's Works*, xiii. 302.

appearance, even before his fame and his fortunes had superadded their charms—the prestige of rank also was not without its effect. These were the sustenance and food of an unmanly vanity, which displayed itself not only in his person, in his dress, and in his manners, but leavened at last his whole character. It was vanity which, combined with bitter defiance of his lameness, instigated him to the remarkable dexterity he acquired in all athletic exercises. We have seen that he was a good boxer, an excellent pistol-shot, a not unskilful rider, and a remarkable swimmer. All this subserved only one end, to excite attention, and obtain distinction. He was annoyed if he made a bad shot, and he had the air of an injured man if anyone surpassed him or presumed to doubt his superiority. In his dress, in his domestic arrangements, in his carriages, the harness of his horses, in the liveries of his servants, he showed little taste: everything was calculated for effect, glaring, extravagant, overladen. His every-day costume in Italy was, however, careless and not conspicuous for taste. His clothes hung about him, and looked as if they had not been made for him but had been bought ready-made. 'His dress'—as Lady Blessington describes it—'consisted of a nankeen jacket and trowsers (changed sometimes for one of green tartan plaid), which appeared to have shrunk from washing; the jacket embroidered in the same colour, and with three rows of buttons; the waist very short, the back very narrow, and the sleeves set in as they used to be ten or fifteen years before; a black stock, very narrow; a dark blue velvet cap with a shade and a very rich gold band and large gold tassel at the crown; nankeen gaiters, and a pair of blue spectacles. His horse was literally covered with various trappings; the saddle was *à la hussarde*, with holsters, in which he always carried

pistols.'[1] It must be admitted, that the picture is not very flattering, either to the nobleman or to the poet. During his pilgrimage he wore the Greek national costume, in which also he was once painted. This reminds us of his portraits and busts, none of which, as we have seen, satisfied him; he thought that all of them failed to do justice to the original. Even the likeness by the excellent portrait-painter, Thomas Phillips, engraved by Agar, 1814, which is generally regarded as the best, utterly displeased him,[2] although it showed that affected knitting of the brow to which he had accustomed himself, doubtless thinking of the line in Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar' (act i. sc. 2):—

The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow.

Hunt[3] sneers at his wearing rings on his fingers; the Countess Guiccioli asserts, that he wore one only which was a memorial of affection. Hunt[4] again maintains that he often played with his pocket-handkerchief, merely to display his delicate bejewelled hand. According to Kennedy,[5] he wore a cameo with the head of Napoleon, and with some self-complacency remarked to Hunt,[6] that Napoleon and he were the only public persons whose initials were the same.[7] It is melancholy to have to

[1] Lady Blessington's *Conversations*, p. 55.

[2] [The objections to Agar's print after Phillips' portrait were not made by Byron himself, but by Mrs. Leigh and other friends; and it was at her special request—not Byron's—that the plate was destroyed. Dr. Elze can hardly have seen the print of which he speaks, which is singularly free from any such expression as he specifies.]

[3] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, p. 75, 4to. 1828.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 91.

[5] *Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron*, p. 316. London, 1830.

[6] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, p. 73.

[7] After the death of his mother-in-law, he added the name Noel to his own.

mention such littlenesses in the biography of a great poet. How manly and noble, on the other hand, does Walter Scott appear, for example, who could not possibly have condescended to such pettiness. Yet one more trait must be added. When Byron once in Athens was standing before a glass, he expressed to Lord Sligo the wish to die of consumption, because then women would think him interesting.[1]

Byron's entrance into society took place under the reign of that dandyism, which was mainly characterised by the hollowest and vainest pretensions to external personal perfections, and by the affectation of the possession of culture, art, and taste. With this went hand in hand a sovereign contempt of true worth, as soon as worth refused to wear the tinsel and uniform of the last fashion. Byron was never able to free himself from the influences of this artificial and corrupt section of society, or to return to a more natural state, although he often discharged the arrows of his satire against it. That all are not free, who mock at their fetters, was true also of him. Even under the blue sky of Italy and amid the turmoil of the Greek war of liberation, his thoughts fondly recurred to the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy of London; the gossip of its upper circles excited to the last his liveliest curiosity, and formed, only too frequently, the subject of his conversation. Byron's successes only exhibited his affectation in the worst light, whereas it might have been thought that his very triumphs would have rendered his love of fame deeper in its character and nobler in its aim. But his passion for glory was not of the genuine stamp; he thirsted not so much for fame as for celebrity—celebrity at any price. This was the true

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 346.

end and purpose of his life, though he here and there denies it. He knew, especially in Italy and Greece, only too well, that the eyes of the world were fixed upon him, and he did his utmost to maintain the fascination. He stood before the world as before a mirror, and the *pose* became at last a second nature; he lived, as it were, on the stage, and coquetted with the world. Although he pretended to despise it, he could not live without its admiration, which he claimed even for his faults. With all this, finally, was associated his rank, which he asserted and paraded with all the pretension, inflation, and bad taste of a *parvenu*. In fact, when we remember how he came to the peerage only through a concatenation of accidents, when we think of the poor and decayed condition from which he was elevated suddenly to an equal dignity with the noblest families of the realm, it might almost be said that his position, in this respect, bore some resemblance to that of a *parvenu*. All who were not of aristocratic birth, with the single exception of his friend Moore, he regarded as beneath him, and the few cases of friendship with persons of the middle class, which we meet with in his youth, were exceptions, springing from youthful exuberance of feeling. How often, in reference to the Countess Guiccioli, does he dwell on the fact that she was his equal in birth and rank; but for this, his conduct to her, would, in all probability, have been very different. In the literary world, he naturally was conscious of the wide gulf between himself and the majority of the votaries of the Muses; but it would have been far worthier in him to have made this less perceptible to them. Hunt, at least, complains bitterly of this. 'An immeasurable vanity kept even his adorers at a distance; like Xerxes enthroned with his millions a mile off.'[1] Lady Blessington expresses

[1] p. 73, 4to. ed. 1828.

herself to the same effect.[1] And Hazlitt[2] calls Byron 'a sublime coxcomb.'

Byron's strange and perverse diet we are inclined to regard as arising from the same source—namely vanity. The reason for this mode of life, alleged by Trelawny, that his legs could not sustain a greater weight of body, appears to have little probability, as it was seen in boxing, riding, and swimming that his legs were by no means destitute of strength; and even when he was most reduced in weight he was unable to traverse greater distances on foot. It is, however, possible, that Byron entertained this notion, and that his lameness afforded a pretext for the indulgence of his vanity. The most undeniable affectation is shown in the readiness with which he incessantly returns to this subject; and in no poet, Dr. Johnson himself not excepted, was there ever so much said on the matter of diet. Shelley also abstained from animal food and the use of wine, and lived like an anchoret; but with him it was a matter of conviction and had no root in vanity; he never entertained the world with his bill of fare, like Byron. As a young man, Byron feared nothing so much as the impairing of the slenderness of his figure by corpulence, to which he had, or thought he had, a hereditary tendency. He fancied that everything which he enjoyed was transformed through his lymphatic constitution of body at once into fat. The curse of the ridiculous was, moreover, always connected in his mind with obesity, for he never forgot how the corpulence of his mother contrasted ridiculously with her nervous excitability and still more with her explosions of passion. Doubtless there constantly floated before his mind's eye the scenes, where the portly lady pursued him about the room to beat him

[1] *Conversations, &c.*, p. 395.

[2] *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits.* Lond. 1858, p. 276.

with the poker. He resolved, therefore, that his weight should never exceed eleven stone, and to compass this he abandoned the ordinary mode of living. For many years he abstained from animal food, and at times also, even from fish, living chiefly on biscuits, mashed potatoes, and soda-water; he paraded this abstemious diet even at dinner-parties, though the suspicion clung to him of making amends in the evening in his solitary chamber for his acts of self-denial before the eye of the world.[1] If this diet proved insufficient to produce the desired measure of leanness, he had recourse to boxing, hot baths, and medicine. He fancied, too, that indulgence in animal food generated savage desires and coarse feelings, and he once asked Moore, whether he did not perceive this in himself. Since then, not only has this error been banished by science, but the fact has also been established, that a diet of animal food by no means tends to the formation of fat, and a countryman of Byron has, in his own person, confirmed the doctrines of chemistry by, as it were, an *experimentum in corpore vili*. Byron, then, did not apply even the right means to combat his tendency to corpulence. But frequently he refrained from eating enough to satisfy nature, and even observed no regularity in the times of his meals. If he ever indulged himself in a fuller meal, evil results necessarily followed with one whose stomach had lost its healthful tone. Under such circumstances, he was naturally always hungry, according to Trelawny's testimony,[2] and had recourse to smoking and chewing tobacco to appease the demands of his stomach. Nothing gave him more annoyance than if anyone thought he had grown stouter, for to be thin and pale he held to be interesting and befitting a poet. Even at Missolonghi

[1] Thomas Watts, *Athenæum*, May 16, 1868, p. 689.
[2] *Recollections*, pp. 47, 48.

we have above exhibited—were the external endowments of Byron. With these he inherited a will and feelings sensitively alive to impressions from without and a passionate temper peculiar to both parents, and in an especial degree to his mother. This natural disposition was further developed and strengthened by an unhappy education, so that, like his mother, Byron became a creature of impulse. His capriciousness and sensitiveness, his wilfulness and pride, rose to a higher pitch, when he found himself raised, while yet a boy, by the inheritance of rank, above the persons around him, who ever obedient to his beck and call ministered to his caprices and were indulgent to the explosions of his passion, or at least extenuated or excused them. A firm and experienced masculine hand was needed to save him from becoming a spoiled child; and he himself, at a later period of life, saw that a son cannot be educated by a mother, especially not such a mother as his, for whom he early lost beyond recovery all respect. The influence of his teachers—educators they cannot be called—on the formation of his character was limited in the extreme; and on himself he never bestowed any pains. When, moreover, he saw that his petted, capricious, and impulsive nature made him appear charming, specially in the eyes of women, he began to acquiesce in it. Why should he acquire firm principles? why should he regulate his mode of action according to the dictates of reason and prudence, if he could gain the applause, even the homage of society, in a far more convenient way—by giving the rein to his impulses and humours? The events connected with the separation from his wife could not fail still more to call forth and strengthen his caprice, wilfulness, and pride. He confessed, indeed, that his capriciousness and want of self-control had essentially contributed to the miserable

issue of his marriage; but this discovery came too late, even if he were really serious when he made this admission. Is it, under such circumstances, to be wondered at, that Byron never acquired the earnestness, firmness, and dignity of true manhood? He was as far removed from Shakespeare's kindly and cheerful gentleness, as from Goethe's Olympic repose, and a longer life would have brought neither of these to him. To the end of his days he could never free himself from outbursts of passion; and Parry relates, that in such moments he stamped with his foot on the ground, and on one or two occasions even threatened to have recourse to his pistols.[1] This aspect of his character is, therefore, more in harmony with the excitable disposition of the impressionable inhabitants of the South, than with the calmer and more reflective character of the people of the North. Hence, perhaps, the reason why he felt more at home and happier in Italy and Greece.

It has been often debated, whether cheerfulness or melancholy predominated in his character; but the truth is, that he fluctuated constantly between the two. He passed suddenly from immoderately high spirits and all the wantonness of satire into profound melancholy; in this he saw not weakness, but strength: permitting himself, in this as in all things, to go to extremes.[2] The Countess Guiccioli relates, that the effusions of his gaiety generally ended in a sigh, which had become a habit with him, and discovers a peculiar beauty in this *singulier et touchant soupir*. When his life in Italy became calmer in its course, cheerfulness gained the predominance, and melancholy appears only as an artificial tint. He coquetted with melancholy and misanthropy; as an example of

[1] *Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 220.
[2] Hunt's *Lord Byron*, p. 131, 4to. ed. 1828.

which we need only recall the scene in Thorwaldsen's studio, when he was sitting to that sculptor for his bust. Macaulay, in his admirable essay on Byron, compares him with those young French gentlemen of whom Prince Arthur[1] says, 'they would be as sad as night only for wantonness.'

Intimately connected with Byron's vacillation and changeableness is the reproach of insincerity, which has often been made against him, as well with respect to his character as to his poetry. Byron had inscribed on his banner war against the falsehood and hypocrisy both of society and literature. He hated England because cant flourished there, and loved Italy because it was free from it. 'The truth is'—he writes in the letter to Murray against Bowles—'that in these days the grand *primum mobile* of England is *cant*; cant political, cant poetical, cant religious, cant moral; but always cant, multiplied through all the varieties of life.'[2] He denounced hypocrisy as the worst of all crimes, and indeed he did his utmost to unmask falsehood in politics, poetry, religion, and morals. In this as in other respects he was a kindred spirit with Rousseau. Before he was twenty years of age his mother used to compare him to Rousseau; and the comparison was taken up and repeated by Madame de Staël, the critics of the 'Edinburgh Review,' and others. He himself objected to the alleged similarity, and on the contrary endeavoured to point out the differences between Rousseau and himself, although, indeed, those he specifies consist merely in things external. 'I can't see any point of resemblance; he wrote prose, I verse; he was of the people, I of the aristocracy; he was a philosopher, I am none; he published his first work at forty, I mine at

[1] Shakespeare's *King John*, act iv. sc. i.
[2] Moore's *Life*, vi. 353.

eighteen; his first essay brought him universal applause, mine the contrary,'[1] &c. Byron continues this string of antitheses, until he comes at last to Rousseau's short-sightedness, with which he contrasts the acuteness of his own vision.[2] All this may be very true, but, withal, the germ of the matter is not affected. Byron had far more affinity with Rousseau than he himself cared to allow; and it was by no accident that he felt drawn to him or followed his steps on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, and in 'Childe Harold'[3] sketched a character of him which admits of the most unmistakable application to himself. Rousseau and Byron had both fallen on times, when, in France and in England, the conventional hollowness and falsehood of society had attained their culminating point, and when, according to natural and historical laws, a change and reaction must take place. Destiny had imposed on both of them the task of being the precursors of this revolution, and, like thunderstorms, of purifying society, from poisonous malignant vapours. It might then have been expected, that, in order to fulfil this mission, they would have been men of stainless veracity and morality, who, not only by their writings, but also by the shining example of their lives, held up a mirror to the world. But they were themselves the products of this corrupt society, and tainted by its influence, so that both laboured under the same contradiction between precepts and practice, intention and action. As Rousseau would have been the last to feel himself happy in his belauded state of nature, so Byron would have been one of the least useful and happy citizens of the free state which was the object of his aspirations. Rousseau was a reformer of education, and yet sent his

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 218.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 219.
[3] Canto iii. st. 76–81.

children to the foundling hospital. Byron condemned war, while he could not exist without arms and was always ready for a duel. That neither of them could free himself either externally or internally from the society which they rose up to battle against and to reform was the source of the sad conflict of their lives. Inconsistencies and weaknesses appear therefore in both of them. Each had received from nature a mental organisation impressionable and excitable to an extraordinary degree. What Byron says of Rousseau is true of himself —'he was all fire.'[1] He possessed the same stormy passions which Rousseau ascribes to himself; 'feeling,' writes Rousseau, 'masters my soul more rapidly than lightning, but instead of illuminating, it consumes and blinds me.' So also was it with Byron. The bent of the genius of both was towards the Ideal; but the Ideal was refracted in their minds as light is in an imperfect and impure medium. In the first book of his *Confessions*, Rousseau sums up his own character in the following words:—'Ce cœur à la fois si fier et si tendre, ce caractère efféminé, mais pourtant indomptable, qui, flottant toujours entre la faiblesse et le courage, entre la mollesse et la vertu, m'a jusqu'au bout mis en contradiction avec moi-même, et a fait que l'abstinence et la jouissance, le plaisir et la sagesse, m'ont également échappé.' This applies to Byron as if it had been intended for him. Rousseau, like Byron, adored freedom and hated constraint. Like Byron, he passionately longed for fame at any cost. Even the circumstances of their lives, amid much diversity, point to a series of similarities far more important than the antitheses dwelt on by Byron. Both received a defective and irregular education, and were

[1] *Childe Harold*, iii. 86.

early left to themselves; Rousseau's relations to the puritanism of Geneva were like those of Byron to the religious opinion of England; both were made miserable by their relations to women, and neither ever reached a true position with regard to them; of both Heine's verse holds true: 'Verfehlte Liebe, verfehltes Leben.' Crossed in love, crossed in life. Rousseau sought rest in Catholicism,[1] and the same destiny would probably have befallen Byron had he lived long enough, at any rate he was not indisposed to the Catholic Church. Both persecuted and exiled by society, on account of their writings, found in foreign lands a kindly reception, and passed wandering and unsettled lives. Neither found rest, but full of suspicion and distrust, thought themselves surrounded by enemies. Nor were they were free from grave offences; their sincerity, their morality, was not of the genuine kind. With regard to the former, they both overshot the mark. Every man has within himself an abyss, which he strives to conceal. Rousseau and Byron revealed theirs to the crowd, not as speaking of themselves only, but, to a certain extent, in the name and as the representatives of society. Their moral defects they held up, like a Medusa's head, to the gaze of the world, with an unmistakably malignant pleasure, and they had no right to affect surprise if society, offended by the sight, averted its eyes from them. Nor were they free from self-complacency in this, for their faults and consequent sufferings were assuredly the product of society, upon which, not unjustly, they threw back the responsibility of them. It is, as if confession of sin being the primary condition of the conversion of society, Rousseau and

[1] [Dr. Elze can hardly mean, that Rousseau ever rested in Catholicism. He became, indeed, a neophyte in his seventeenth year, in the Hospice at Turin, but after a few days abjured and was expelled.]

Byron had in its name made this confession. Byron had, indeed, less to confess than Rousseau in his *Confessions*; but as if he felt the indispensable need of moral infirmity in the presence of society, he loved to speak continually of his faults, to exaggerate some, to charge himself falsely with others, and to hint at some secret crime which he feigned to have committed. He was, as some one has excellently said, 'le fanfaron de ses vices.' Like Rousseau, he was a victim of society, which was not entitled to complain of him, for he was society's own creation; least of all does it become women to throw a stone at him. Byron's propensity of making the world the confidant of all his faults and sorrows accompanied him through life. All that Moore says, when he expatiates on the perfect candour of Byron, and which Parry re-iterates, must be understood in this sense. Every thing that came into his head he uttered, nor could he keep to himself either his own affairs or the communications made to him by others. This, however, was not that true and genuine sincerity which he should have made, in his writings and his life, the ground and purpose of action. But with regard to the principle of their morality also, Byron and Rousseau were guilty of a grave error, when, for the unveracious and insincere conventional words and phrases, which they so justly denounced, they substituted the heart and genius of the poet, as the only moral law binding upon him. They demand not merely space for 'den Flügelschlag einer freien Seele,' but proclaim the heart as the sovereign moral power, and place their own individual likings and fancies above the moral order of the world. In none of Byron's poems is this to be read more distinctly between the lines than in 'The Lament of Tasso.' Both, therefore, are fundamentally immoral, not because of the sensuality which may be expressed in their works

—this reproach Byron justly repels—but because they apply a false moral standard and seek to inoculate their readers with its principles. Their paths, indeed, are different, though starting from the same point, but that which Rousseau followed is the more dangerous. Rousseau is the votary of a false ideality, and bedecks untruth itself, and especially sensuality, with its tinsel; he elevates infirmities and faults to the rank of moral perfections, and with his pinchbeck finery decorates the animal in man to wear the semblance of an angel, with which, perhaps, his sensual Romanic nature may have something to do. Women, therefore, are for Rousseau and against Byron. For Byron could not here, at least, deny the more reflective and critical Teutonic nature which was in him. From idealism he plunged into nihilism; he strips from things their illusive lustre and loves to represent them in their least ideal aspect, although the ideal involuntarily ever and anon regains its sovereignty; he sees everywhere only infirmities, defects, and folly, and seeks to degrade the angel in man to the animal. Ultimately he opposed everything, from no principle whatever, merely for the sake of opposition—a natural consequence of his wilfulness. Nothing stands before the sweeping judgments of 'Don Juan;' Plato is a tedious bore, a charlatan, a coxcomb, no better than a go-between;[1] Shakespeare is a barbarian; Wellington the prop of an imbecile legitimacy;[2] Blucher a drunken corporal, &c. He is not content with destroying illusion, but often goes so far as to declare reality to be illusion.

We must not forget, however, to make allowance for Byron's chameleon-like alternations of feeling. He felt with extraordinary intensity and passion, more passion-

[1] *Don Juan*, canto i. 116. [2] *Ibid.* ix. 1–11.

ately, perhaps, than any other poet, either ancient or modern; an admission which even his enemies make. Relaxation, according to known laws, is necessarily consequent on intensity of passion; and extremes in one direction must be followed by those in another. Our mind, like our body, admits of only a certain measure of tension, and he only can be constant and true to himself who maintains this measure. Byron's poetry is the effusion of the moment, the expression of the inspired present: he knows himself to be an 'improvisatore.'[1] Hence he could scarcely write except under the influence of external impressions; while Scott, on the contrary, needed no incitement from without. Byron's poetry is accordingly, both in its matter and in its relation to his life, strangely inconsistent, but it is not therefore untrue. He himself sees in his dependence on external impressions the proof of truth and sincerity. Thus in 'Don Juan' he says:

> —surely they're sincerest
> Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest.[2]

As has been already shown in the case of the well-known poem 'Fare thee well,' he was at the moment really possessed by what he wrote. The danger of insincerity is one which lies near the poet, who is able to invoke and command the moment of inspiration and throw himself into a certain state of feeling. Goethe, as we know, says:

> Gebt ihr euch einmal für Poeten,
> So commandirt die Poesie.
>
> If for poets ye yourselves proclaim,
> Poetry your mistress then becomes.

Byron understood this thoroughly. Nathan, who set the

[1] *Don Juan*, xv. 20. [2] *Ibid.* xvi. 97.

'Hebrew Melodies' to music, relates an incident that exemplifies this. Irritated by the current reports, that he was suffering from mental aberration, Byron said to this composer he would try for once to write like a madman. Hastily seizing the pen, he stared for a moment wildly into vacancy, and then wrote down as if by a flash of inspiration, and without erasing a single word, the verses beginning:[1]

My soul is dark—oh! quickly string
The harp I yet can brook to hear;
And let thy gentle fingers fling
Its melting murmurs o'er mine ear.

Byron's conversation also bore the same character of improvisation and versatility. He *improvised*, as Beyle (Stendhal) relates, for a whole hour, and, indeed, better than Madame de Staël ever did, but then soon he fell from the height of his inspiration. 'When Byron was elevated,' he says, 'and talked with enthusiasm, his sentiments were noble, great, and generous. It was the finest conversation I ever met with in my life; a volume of new ideas and generous sentiments came pouring out in such novel form, that one fancied oneself enjoying them for the first time; but'—he continues—'during the remainder of the evening, he was thoroughly the Englishman and the noble lord.'[2] This opinion of Beyle is, however, among the most favourable ever expressed on Byron's conversation; almost all accounts agree in admitting, that he by no means shone in it, and he himself also appears not to have deceived himself on this point. He was averse to talk on literary matters, perhaps, because he felt himself very little equal to such topics; when however, Shelley was present, the subject of literature

[1] Hebrew Melodies, *Works*, x. 83.

[2] Quoted in the Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections*, ii. 207, English edition.

could not be avoided. Byron agreed with Scott in hating to be treated in society as an author; he wished to be regarded only as a nobleman and man of the world. He never, as Trelawny says,[1] appeared in society with the book and mantle of Prospero, while Shelley never laid aside either; his conversation was, on the contrary, characterised for the most part by flippancy. He had no love for serious discussion, and contradiction was intolerable to him.

We again resume our thread, returning to the doubts which have been expressed with regard to Byron's sincerity and truth. Parry, who praises his sincerity, relates that insincerity and dissimulation in others were intolerable to him, and that it gave him great pleasure to expose these defects. He did this, indeed, in a peculiar fashion, inasmuch as he generally, like women, repeated the remarks and opinions expressed by others regarding a third person, to that person himself. He probably meant by this, so Parry imagines, to inculcate on others the frankness and sincerity which he so highly esteemed; but it cannot be denied, that he enjoyed at the same time the embarrassment of the persons thus exposed.[2] He was, in a word, thoroughly indiscreet. But he was more than this. Lady Blessington says without reserve, that he was never *de bonne foi*, that he placed himself in sad antithesis to his motto '*Crede Byron*;' that he loved to mystify people, to palm off tales upon them, to practise silly jokes, and produce mischief among them.[3] Dallas[4] lamented the insincerity even of his dedications, for Byron cherished neither esteem nor affection for the persons to whom he dedicated his poems; and asserted, that no one could be

[1] *Recollections*, p. 26.
[2] Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 158, 159.
[3] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 260. [4] *Ibid.* iii. 125.

sure of him. Even of his friends he did not always speak well, and frequently dwelt rather on their defects than their merits; when the satirical humour was on him, they were not spared in the epigrams he wrote at their expense, and freely handed about. It is said, as some apology for the practice, that this malevolence never came from his heart, and that it was neither deliberate nor lasting. He wrote against Rogers, for example, whom he reckoned among his few intimate friends, a bitter satire (never indeed published), which he is said to have placed under a cushion on which he obliged Rogers to sit down.[1] In his controversy with Bowles, Moore also received an occasional side-blow; and neither Byron nor Moore could, in the bottom of their hearts, suppress a feeling of distrust towards each other. 'When with you'—writes Moore to Byron—'I feel sure of you; but at a distance one is often a little afraid of being made the victim, all of a sudden, of some of those fanciful suspicions, which, like meteoric stones, generate themselves (God knows how) in the upper regions of your imagination, and come clattering down upon our heads, some fine sunny day when we are least expecting such an invasion.'[2] That Byron was distrustful is confirmed on all sides; it is also in perfect harmony with his character. After all he had experienced in life, this weakness might have been forgiven, had it not been intimately connected with his other faults. His pride rested far too much on external advantages to permit him to waive his dignity in friendly intercourse, though it lay in his power to resume it at pleasure. He was constantly possessed with anxious fears, lest the raillery and mockery, which he dealt out so freely without respect of persons,

[1] Compare H. C. Robinson's *Diary*, ii. 484, iii. 17.
[2] Moore's *Life*, iv. 223.

might be paid back in kind, conscious as he was of the many joints in his own armour; but he, as the saying runs, would always give, but never take. He was not one of those cheerful spirits, whom Goethe best loved to see among his guests;[1] to him rather these verses apply:

> Wer sich nicht selbst zum Besten haben kann,
> Der ist gewiss nicht von den Besten.

This is possible only, where there is absolute genuineness and sincerity. In this, as in other things, he was wanting in right feeling to others, and showed himself a thorough egotist. Yet it must be said in his favour, that he was capable of the highest esteem for men of excellence and worth, and instinctively drew towards them — as witness his friendship for Hobhouse, Rogers, Scott, and Shelley. Even Moore, though inferior to these in strength of character, was yet a sterling man; he had also that mobility of temperament so peculiar to the Irish race, which was, perhaps, the ground of their harmony in friendship.

In politics and religion Byron's conduct partook of the same unstable and contradictory character; it was stained by vanity and insincerity. He boasts, that he had been stable and consistent in politics, if in anything; which is so far true, that he never descended from his independent position to pay homage to the powers that be –

[1] [The allusion is to the epigram of Goethe's, entitled 'Meine Wahl.' *Werke*, ii. 303. Stuttgart, 1857:

> Ich liebe mir den heitern Mann
> Am meisten unter meinen Gästen:
> Wer sich nicht selbst zum Besten haben kann,
> Der ist gewiss nicht von den Besten.

> At table glad I welcome as my guest
> The man of cheerful mien and heart:
> Who *there* is loth to be and give his best,
> Not of the best is he, and may depart.

as the 'Lake School' had done, whose apostasy he could as little forgive as he could that of Monti the Italian. He never, indeed, was exposed to temptation in political life, till at the close of his life in Greece. 'My politics,' he writes to Murray,[1] 'are to me like a young mistress to an old man—the worse they grow the fonder I become of them. I care nothing for consequences on this point.' A loyal fidelity to his convictions must not however be inferred from this, for on closer examination we soon discover, that his political views by no means rested on the firm basis of well-formed convictions and principles; they were oftener prejudices than opinions, and not the results of thought, but of mere feeling. In politics, as in religion, he in reality never got beyond negation; hence the source of his weakness, but also his strength, as will be shown when we come to consider, in our next chapter, the kind of influence exercised by him. Everywhere he declaims most vehemently against despots and despotism, although in his heart he was not only an aristocrat, but was even not without leanings to absolutism. This, also, he himself acknowledged; 'born an aristocrat,' he said to Medwin,[2] 'I am naturally one by temper.' His sense of independence, which formed one of his most prominent characteristics, and of which he was so proud, reached no further than his own person; he could not raise himself to the justice and unselfishness of granting the same measure of independence to all men. No true love of liberty such as Shelley, faithful ever to his convictions, possessed, can, therefore, be ascribed to him. We saw how indulgent he was to the darker sides of Ali Pacha's history and character simply because of that vigorous rule, which seemed so imposing to him. He chose, with evident

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 34.

[2] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 423.

predilection, despotic characters for the heroes of his poetic tales, and in his fancy identified himself more or less with them. At a later period of his life, the dream of setting up such a pacha-like government, either in some Grecian island or in South America, long occupied his mind. There was such a contradiction of principles in him, that he at the same time reverenced Napoleon and Washington. The latter he upheld as the solitary pure and great name in history; so that he must be allowed the merit of recognising true greatness, however unlike his own. For Bolivar, also, after whom his yacht was named, he was loud in his admiration. Of Napoleon he had two modes of judging—a prosaic in which he admired, and a poetic in which he inveighed against him. Thus his indignation was excited especially by Napoleon's abdication and unworthy exit. Had the emperor known how to die with dignity at the right moment, Byron's poetical judgment would probably have been different. But he called him repeatedly his 'Pagod;'[1] he spoke much and always admiringly of him; he even compared himself with him, thus representing himself as a Napoleon in the realm of poetry.

> Even I—albeit I'm sure I did not know it
> Nor sought of foolscap subjects to be king—
> Was reckoned a considerable time
> The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.
>
> But Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
> My Leipsic, and my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain;
> 'La belle Alliance' of dunces down at zero,
> Now that the Lion's fallen, may rise again;
> But I will fall at least as fell my hero;
> Nor reign at all, or as a monarch reign;
> Or to some lonely isle of gaolers go,
> With turncoat Southey for my turnkey Lowe.[2]

Again he always took the side of Napoleon against the

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 21. [2] *Don Juan*, canto xi. 55.

Allies. With one and the same stroke of the pen he showed himself prepared to combine the most glaring contradictions. He wished from his heart, that Napoleon may manure the fields of France with the invading hosts of the Allies; for—he continues—'I hate invaders of every country, and have no patience with the cowardly cry of exultation over him, at whose name you all turned whiter than the snow to which you are indebted for your triumph.'[1] This he wrote with express reference to the Russian campaign, as if he ought not to have known, that of all invaders and conquerors Napoleon was the worst, and that the Allies rose against him simply in self-defence. The misery wrought through Napoleon, the oppression and suffering of the nations enslaved by him, affect him little; on this point his hatred against despotism is blind and dumb. Here he judged as an Englishman who had no direct or active interest in the matter. National feeling, that conscience of nations, he reckoned as nothing. The Allies, on the other hand, he overwhelms both collectively and individually, whether he speaks of their leaders or of their followers, with vehement invectives, without distinguishing governments from the nations governed. And yet—new contradiction—it was he who, during the Greek war of Liberation, preached incessantly the duty of respecting those very powers against which he had inveighed, and even quarrelled with other Philhellenes who did not judge as he did. He expected from the Allies salvation for the Greeks, and for himself perhaps—the crown. All these contradictions admit of one explanation, that, with the solitary exception of his interference in the affairs of Greece, he had never approached politics as a thinker or statesman, but as a

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 34.

lyrical poet. 'Politics'—as he himself says in a letter to Murray [1]—'is with me a feeling,' and in Carbonarism he found, as we have seen, 'the true poetry of politics.' In Greece alone he descended from the poetry to the prose of politics; and even from this point of view he would have been more consistent and logical, if his poetry had not been the poetry of the moment. He demanded from politics only poetic suggestion, and Napoleon furnished this in far higher measure than all the allied monarchs put together. Hence Napoleon exercised on him, and on many other poets, a poetical charm, almost a magical fascination; but however conceivable or excusable this may be, we cannot behold in such poets the true and genuine champions of freedom. Byron, as a political poet, nevertheless contributed powerfully to the movement and development of events in the time immediately subsequent to his own. He became a fermenting element in politics and in poetry, the standard-bearer of radicalism, far more for the continent than for his own country. This historical position scarcely, however, belongs to a chapter which treats of Byron's personal characteristics; in the next chapter we will recur to it.

This peculiar relation of Byron to politics explains also, why he never interested himself in English politics, and how he was unsuited to the career of a statesman. When, on a certain occasion, the conversation turned on Harrow, as having been the nursery of all the statesmen of the time, and Medwin expressed surprise that the poet never had the ambition to shine as a statesman, Byron replied, that the petty intrigues of cabinets, or the still pettier factions and contests for power among the members of parliament, could never have engaged his sympathy.[2]

[1] Moore's *Life*, iii. 35.

[2] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 351-2.

This was, however, a pretext as superficial as it was delusive. It would have flattered his ambition to direct as a minister the destinies of England and influence those of Europe, provided the path leading to such distinction had been shorter and easier. But he was in nowise fitted for regular, deliberate, continuous action, systematically directed to one end. In such a career he could not awake one morning and find himself famous. Moreover, the party life inseparable from English politics, demands disciplined action in one fixed groove; *there* no place is found for vacillation according to the impulses of poetry. Byron's nature was far too unstable, inconsistent, and egotistical to accommodate itself to the spirit of parliamentary party. From the possible leadership of the opposition too, his position in the Upper House excluded him. Thus there remained to him nothing but participation in the revolutionary politics of the continent, from which he gathered, at least in Italy, neither roses nor laurels.

The vacillating and inconsistent character of Byron appears in religion not less than in politics; hence among his countrymen there always exists a question as to his true relations to religion. He was educated in the strictest Calvinism. His mother dragged him, while yet a child in Aberdeen, regularly to church, for which he revenged himself by pricking her with pins whenever the sermon became tiresome to him. He himself says, that he was early disgusted with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where he was cudgelled to church for the first ten years of his life.[1] A German comprehends at once the impossibility of a mind like Byron's surrendering itself to dogmatism, especially Protestant dogmatism. In Germany such an education would have led him to perfect indifference if

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 216.

not worse; in England this was impossible. Byron saw well the disadvantage of his position, for, said he, in matters of religion the advantage lies on the side of him who believes. Nevertheless he nobly felt

> 'tis a base
> Abandonment of reason to resign
> Our right of thought—[1]

'It was useless'—he says[2] in one of his memoranda—'to tell me not to reason, but to believe. You might as well tell a man, not to wake, but sleep. And then to bully with torments and all that!' He expresses also the principle of liberty of belief very rightly, when he says,

> I speak not of men's creeds—they rest between
> Man and his Maker.[3]

But his countrymen and countrywomen would hear nothing of this; to them his position in regard to religion was the greatest stone of offence, and Byron continually irritated them, because he never failed to return to the discussion and treatment of religious questions. They would have forgiven him everything, if he had only professed the creed of the Church. Once only did concern for his religious belief assume—in the well-known case of Mrs. Shephard—a tender form. On the death of this lady, after a short but happy marriage, her husband found among her papers a touching prayer for the conversion of Byron, which she had written in the year 1814 at Hastings, where she had seen the poet several times at public places. A copy of this Mr. Shephard sent to Byron, then living at Pisa, with the wish that the prayer might not be fruitless. Byron in his letter of thanks did not conceal his opinion, that a man's creed does not depend on himself, although he again admitted, that

[1] *Childe Harold*, canto iv. st. 127.
[2] Moore's *Life*, vi. 258.
[3] *Childe Harold*, canto iv. st. 95.

believers had a decided advantage — 'for this simple reason, that, if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst for them), out of nothing nothing can arise, not even sorrow.'[1] For the consolation of Mr. Shephard he also added, that many sceptics had ended as believers.[2] With this one exception, the conflict between the orthodoxy of the Church and the scepticism of Byron always displayed itself in the harshest form.

When 'Cain' appeared, pulpits thundered against the author, and when the work was pirated, the Lord Chancellor refused to protect Murray in his rights of property, on the ground of its being immoral and irreligious.[3] But it cannot be said with truth, that Byron was an enemy to positive religion—least of all an atheist. In spite of his scepticism he was too much of an Englishman to be quite free from the influence of the dogmas of Christian belief. He revolted indeed against their tyranny, but he would fain have returned to them, at least he could never decide for pure Deism. He reverenced the Bible, and not merely for the poetical character of its contents; his reverence was rather the result of a feeling with which he had been inoculated from childhood: he read it diligently, and at Missolonghi he had it constantly lying on his table. He did not expressly deny immortality—on this point he is unusually full of contradiction—yet his hope of it was far from being assured. Nay, death might probably be succeeded by eternal sleep—the Nirwana of Buddhism. In 'Don Juan' he says:[4]

[1] Byron's letter to Mr. Shephard.—*Life*, v. 289. [2] *Ibid.* v. 289.
[3] *Life*, v. 309. [4] Canto xiv. 4.

A sleep without dreams, after a rough day
Of toil, is what we covet most; and yet
How clay shrinks back from more quiescent clay.

Yet he did not fear death, but regarded it always with composure, thus verifying in himself his own verses— [1]

And strange to say, the sons of pleasure—
They who have revelled beyond measure
In beauty, wassail, wine and treasure—
Die calm, or calmer oft than he
Whose heritage was misery;
For he who hath in turn run through
All that was beautiful and new
Hath nought to hope and nought to leave,
And save the future (which is viewed
Not quite as men are base or good,
But as their nerves may be endued,)
With nought perhaps to grieve.

That nerves and constitution, not religion, are the main things on a death-bed, Byron elsewhere asserted.[2] Against one dogma only he never varied in his denunciations—the eternity of hell torments.[3] Had he really been convinced of 'eternal sleep,' this doctrine would necessarily have been indifferent to him; it was, on the contrary, dreaded by him, and he found something consolatory and seductive in the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory; indeed, he was not without leanings towards the Church of Rome.[4] We have seen that he caused Allegra to be educated as a Catholic, and in 'Don Juan' he makes Aurora Raby of that faith.[5] The Catholic Church on the one hand grants to those who profess it, greater freedom in some respects than Anglicanism, and on the other, it is often seen in life that the greatest sceptics finally seek refuge in its bosom. Had he lived longer, this might have been—it has been

[1] *Mazeppa*, xvii. *Works*, xi. 174.
[2] Moore's *Life*, iv. 321.
[3] *Vision of Judgment*, stanza xiii.
[4] Moore's *Life*, v. 142.
[5] *Don Juan*, xv. 46.

said—Byron's end. The doctrine of hell torments formed the principal point of controversy between himself and Dr. Kennedy, who condemned their finality as a Socinian heresy. In other respects, no great value can be assigned to the religious conversations which Kennedy recorded in his book. On its first appearance, various journals expressed a suspicion, which was by no means unwarranted by what we know of his character, that the poet had been playing upon the doctor, who was so earnest for his conversion; for playfulness and gravity were often strangely interchanged in him, and he doubtless foresaw, that the doctor would one day parade these conversations before the world. What induced him to enter into these disputations, has been already explained.[1]

If Byron found it impossible to arrive at a solution of the great mysteries of the world and of life through positive religion, it might be thought that his restless spirit would have attempted to attain it by philosophy. But he possessed still less talent and inclination for metaphysics than for dogmatic theology. Even Shelley was not able to gain him over to metaphysics, which he thought were good only for Germans; metaphysics were always to him unintelligible and repulsive jargon. He bewailed Shelley's affection for metaphysical utopias, and thought that he would have obtained far wider recognition as a poet, if he had only consented to abandon this study. Hunt[2] expressly assures us that Byron was not a good logician, or a systematic thinker.

A third possibility remained to Byron, to disturb his mind neither with dogmatic theology nor with metaphysics, but to accept the 'grand peut-être,' as Rabelais calls it, and following the example of Pyrrho, to leave the un-

[1] See Chapter IX. [2] i. 71. 8vo. ed.

fathomable unfathomed. He made, in fact, an attempt in this direction—if this, again, were not a mere passing mood of his mind. Who can say, whether or not in the passage of 'Don Juan'[1] he expresses his true and final conviction:

> For me, I know nought; nothing I deny,
> Admit, reject, contemn; and what know *you*
> Except, perhaps, that you were born to die?
> And both may after all turn out untrue.

As is often the case with minds so unstable and unsettled, Byron also, in spite of his scepticism, had a weak point, at which the need of faith asserted itself at the wrong time and in the wrong place—this was his leaning to superstition. His friends and biographers agree in testifying that he was not free from this failing.[2] From his childhood—his mother also was superstitious—he believed in presentiments, in lucky and unlucky days, even in the appearance of ghosts; on a Friday he would never begin any undertaking—and it is said that he really never commenced any—with the exception of his voyage from Genoa to Missolonghi—where he died. He had even a certain enjoyment in these superstitious emotions; and possibly in the depth of his heart he might have designed to appear interesting through them. It is, however, remarkable how this superstition harmonised with his peculiar mode of viewing Nature. That loving, absorbing devotion to Nature in all her forms, such as Shakespeare or Wordsworth possessed, was never his. Shakespeare with equal intelligence and equal love embraced creation in its greatest as in its least manifestations, from the sea to the flower or the

[1] Canto xiv. st. 3.

[2] Compare Moore's *Life*, vi. 57-63. Medwin, p. 72. Lady Blessington, p. 42. Hunt, p. 84. Parry, p. 214.

insect, and showed in this his incomparable universality. Wordsworth's narrower genius knows and loves Nature, indeed, more in her humbler and more familiar aspects; although, it cannot be denied, that he wins from her the knowledge of many a secret, and has often profoundly understood her charms. Byron was, on the other hand, indifferent to the wonders of organic nature, to the processes and phenomena of animal and vegetable life; in his youth he had received no instruction in the contemplation and knowledge of Nature, for physical science formed no part of the instruction of the youth of England. In nature as in man, the wild had pre-eminent attractions for him.[1] He loved only the grand and sublime forms of inorganic nature, the seas and the mountains. These were the objects which drew forth his most ambitious and sublime descriptions, connecting with them as he did his own elegiac views on the destiny of the world and of man. With genuine lyrical sympathy he felt himself a part of Nature, and blended himself with her. Lofty mountains are 'a feeling to him;' the sky, the sea, the mountains, are a portion of himself, as he of them.[2] It was one of his most loved and lofty pleasures to sit on a lonely crag and look out on the sea. The desert, had he known it, would have acted not less powerfully on his imagination, and doubtless wrapped his spirit in its mysterious charms. But desert, sea, and mountain are just those domains on which the mysteries of the elemental powers of Nature in all their fulness are encountered by man most directly and powerfully; and hence the seaman, the mountaineer, and the wanderer of the desert are always inclined to superstition. In Byron's mind, therefore, superstition was completely in accordance with his views of Nature.

[1] *Childe Harold*, canto ii. st. 37. [2] *Ibid.* canto iii. st. 72, 75.

Byron's relations to art also resembled his relations to nature; he possessed only a lyrical sensibility for it. Like his countrymen generally, he was deficient in natural taste and intelligence for the beautiful in art; and when, at a later period of his life, art presented itself especially to his notice in Italy, the time for culture was past; his character was formed, and he thought of everything but the study of art. Thus architecture, sculpture, and painting were subjects barred to him; and he often said that he knew nothing about and had no interest in them, a confession, to the truth of which even his friends could not but subscribe. His judgment, here as everywhere, was guided by the poetical impression, or feeling, or impulse. In the description of Haidee he reproaches sculptors as being without distinction 'a race of mere impostors.'

> I have seen much finer women, ripe and real,
> Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal.[1]

He detested the pictures of saints. Rubens was to him a dauber; he felt shocked by his colossal women and 'infernal glare of colour;' nor did he think much of Murillo or Velasquez. 'Depend upon it,' he writes to Murray, 'that of all the arts, painting is the most artificial and unnatural, and that by which the nonsense of mankind is most imposed upon. I never yet saw the picture or the statue which came a league within my conception or expectation; but I have seen many mountains, and seas, and rivers, and views, and two or three women, who went as far beyond it—besides some horses, and a lion (at Veli Pacha's) in the Morea, and a tiger at supper in Exeter Change.'[2] He has, nevertheless, in the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' devoted some inspired

[1] *Don Juan*, canto ii. 118.

[2] Moore's *Life*, iv. 9.

stanzas to the world-renowned masterpieces of art; to the Medicean Venus, for example, to the Dying Gladiator, to the Apollo Belvidere, to the Colosseum, to the Pantheon, and to St. Peter's. He was especially charmed with Titian's portrait of Ariosto in the Manfrini Palace at Venice, which he describes as 'the poetry of portrait and the portrait of poetry.'[1]

The only art for which Byron possessed a certain amount of feeling was music, though it cannot be said, that he truly understood it. Like all poets, like Shakespeare, Scott, Burns, and Moore, he loved national music, the touching melodies of which spring at once from the heart of the people, those simple airs which weave round the words of the poet a soft garland of rhythm, and, like the sound of bells from the village home, awaken in us the delights and the longings of youth. The Swiss national airs made a deep impression on him. The higher music on the other hand, especially instrumental, left him cold and untouched; but he delighted to hear the Countess Guiccioli sing some of the airs of the melodious Rossini, and even sang them himself. That he loved and sang Moore's Melodies has been already mentioned. Music in the highest sense, the music of the spheres and its echo in the earthly world, he often indeed praised; thus, in 'Don Juan':

> There's music in the sighing of a reed;
> There's music in the gushing of a rill;
> There's music in all things if men had ears;
> Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.[2]

But for this music he himself had not always an open ear; and, especially in 'Don Juan,' he heard much oftener the discord than the harmony of the world. In opposition to true musicians, he aims as often at resolving

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 8.

[2] Canto xv. 5.

harmony into discord as conversely discord into harmony. In so far, then, Byron, both in the real and the metaphorical sense, belongs to those who, as Shakespeare says, have music in themselves; and of the good qualities which are spoken in the praise of such, he possessed one of the best and fairest—a good and tender heart. Even Dallas[1] admits, that though his pen was sometimes malignant and godless, yet his heart was good and gentle. In his youth he was obliging, capable of attachment, craving to love and to be loved, and grateful for every act of kindness shown to him. To his servants he was always a kind master, and without exception they loved and revered him. His goodness of heart bordered on feminine tenderness, and he often assumed a tone of irony and bitterness to shield him from a weakness, which might have exposed him to mockery. Having once wounded an eaglet at the Gulf of Lepanto, whose life he in vain endeavoured to save, he vowed from that moment never again to kill an animal; and in fact we do not hear that he ever indulged in field sports; he preferred to exercise his skill in shooting at inanimate objects. Angling, also, he condemned as cruel:

> And angling too, that solitary vice,
> Whatever Isaac Walton sings or says;
> The quaint old cruel coxcomb in his gullet
> Should have a hook and a small trout to pull it.[2]

He who felt thus towards the animal world, could not, in spite of all his selfishness and his misanthropy, be hard and cruel to his fellow-men. Warm and helpful sympathy with the distress of others accompanied him through life. 'Misfortune was sacred in his eyes,' says Lady Blessington,[3] 'and seemed to be the last link of the

[1] iii. 84.
[2] *Don Juan*, canto xiii. 106.
[3] *Conversations, &c.*, p. 235, cf. p. 299.

chain which connected him with his fellow-men.' His sympathies did not even grow cold, where misfortune was the consequence of misconduct. 'Those who have lost,' he said, 'the right to pity, in losing reputation and self-respect, are the persons who stand most in need of commiseration—for they have the reproaches of conscience to embitter their draught—this it is that makes me pity the guilty and respect the unfortunate.'[1] His actions in this respect corresponded with his words. As early as the year 1813, he relieved, by a not insignificant sum (150*l.*), an applicant whose unworthiness he himself did not deny.[2] On the occasion of the separation, he was vehemently attacked in the press by Mr. John Scott, a former school companion at Aberdeen. After the sudden death of this gentleman, Byron not only spoke respectfully of him, but contributed also, without giving his name, to the support of his widow. How Byron, when he was himself in straitened circumstances, never closed his hand: how he exercised an almost princely munificence in Italy, has already been fully related. He had an especial sympathy for the maimed and deformed; his favourite beggar at Ravenna was a cripple. But the inconsistencies and contradictions of his nature failed not to manifest themselves even in money matters—for inconsistency was a destiny from which he could not escape. In Italy he learned to know the value of money, and an undeniable niggardliness acted as the counterpoise to his munificence. That Hunt should complain of this does not prove much; for precisely in money matters Hunt was not a trustworthy judge. But the fact is corroborated on all sides, and Byron often accused himself of avarice; he even expressed his joy that he had arrived at this 'good old-gentlemanly vice,'[3] while

[1] *Conversations, &c.*, p. 237.
[2] Moore's *Life*, ii. 336.
[3] *Don Juan*, canto i. 216.

he hoped that now his other vices would take their leave.[1] His youthful resolve to receive no *honorarium* for his literary works he had long renounced, and learnt to drive a hard bargain with Murray. An estimate from Mr. Murray's account shows that he had received from him not less than 19,340*l.*[2] It forms a strange contrast with this, that in Italy when Byron dined alone, the cost of his dinner should have amounted to only a few pauls. This can of course form no subject of blame, where his own person merely was concerned; but he extended this niggardliness to others, and as it appears, there was associated with it a fear and distrust of being defrauded by his people—which, indeed, might not seldom have been the case. This meanness went so far, that at the sale of his yacht, before his voyage to Greece, he did not allow the sailors serving in it to keep the jackets which he had provided.[3] Still more injurious to his memory is the omission, discussed in a previous chapter, with which he may be charged in respect to a provision for the Countess Guiccioli. To Shelley's widow he also behaved shabbily —as Trelawny asserts,[4] inasmuch as instead of assisting her, he did not even repay the many advances which had been made by Shelley.

Such are the traits of the man Byron, which inevitably blend with those of the poet, although in a higher degree than other poets he had, as it were, two states of existence, of which he was quite conscious. 'One state of existence,' he says to Lady Blessington, 'is purely con-

[1] *Don Juan*, v. 143.

[2] Compare note to the 'English Bards, &c.,' vii. 235.

[3] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 421.

[4] *Recollections, &c.*, p. 152. [Let those who choose, believe this on the authority of Mr. Trelawny: the translator cannot.]

templative, during which the crimes, faults, and follies of mankind are laid open to my view; and the other active, when I play my part in the drama of life, as if impelled by some power over which I have no control, though the consciousness of doing wrong remains.'[1] Still more clearly and vigorously he writes to Moore: 'A man's poetry is a distinct faculty or soul, and has no more to do with the every day individual than the inspiration with the Pythoness when removed from her tripod.'[2] Certainly this is more applicable to him than to most other poets. In virtue of his characteristic faculty of improvisation his life and poetry went side by side, each unaffected by the other. His poetry bears the same relation to his life as his own Apollo-like head to his Satyr-like feet. We know, alas! far too much of his life, and indeed through his own fault; of Shakespeare's we know far too little; but it would be to Byron's advantage, if the story of his life overladen with petty details could be exchanged for the almost blank page on which all we know of Shakespeare is written. If we possessed of him nothing but his works, even without his introductory remarks, posterity would doubtless form a far brighter and nobler idea of his life and character than truth would warrant. He is a giant so long as he floats in the æther of his poetry, but he becomes a dwarf—the very converse of Antæus—as soon as he touches the earth. The more attentively we trace the development of his character, which, spite of its undeniably finer qualities, has been shown to be so inconsistent, vain, embittered, petty, unmanly, egotistical, often insincere and distrustful, the more shall we be convinced of the truth of the expression of Walter Scott: 'After all, *c'est du génie mal logé*, and that's all that can be said

[1] *Conversations, &c.*, p. 119. [2] Moore's *Life*, v. 285.

about it;'[1] yet Walter Scott is among the sincerest of Byron's friends, and always unreservedly and joyously recognised the nobler elements of his character. Goethe,[2] also a kind and partial judge, admits, that Byron's mode of life and the character of his poetry scarcely admit of a judgment in accordance with strict right and reason. This opinion requires to be modified, for it must not be overlooked, in how unusual a measure the development of Byron's character from youth upwards was subjected to the influence of social and domestic relations the most unpromising and adverse, and how undeniably he was a victim of them. His main offence ultimately amounts to this, that he did not fight his way to victory through the faults with which he was born, and in which he had been trained; he was too weak for the evil circumstances in which destiny had placed him. We cannot but think that the portraiture of his youth makes a purer and happier impression than that of his latter years. We possess, indeed, for the first part of his life scarcely any other source than that which Moore, with his flatteries and embellishments, is pleased to give, and it may be questioned whether our judgment of his youthful character would not undergo a change, if our command of materials concerning it were as copious as those concerning his manhood. Much also of essential importance to the true delineation of his life and character is still withheld. However this may be, his unhappy marriage, and the shameful charge brought against him at the separation from his wife, produced a lasting and baneful effect on him, and this fact must never be left out of consideration when we form our estimate of him. The embittered

[1] Letter to Mr. Morrit (May, 1816), Lockhart's *Life*, v. 140. Edin. 1856.

[2] On 'Manfred,' *Sämmt. Werke*, xxvi. 428.

and defiant feelings which were thus engendered, form a ground of extenuation not to be overlooked for the excesses into which Byron in his despair plunged at Venice. If, where he knew himself purest and most free from stain he *there* was most unworthily calumniated and at last outlawed by his countrymen, what motive remained for moral effort, moral elevation, and the ennobling of his character? Must he not from that moment have looked down with profound contempt on public opinion and public estimation? Must it not have appeared to him quite indifferent whether he deserved its approval or not? Lady Byron must bear the greater share of that censure, which cannot be withheld from the errors of his later days or from his cynical and sarcastic philosophy of life.

Du génie mal logé! But genius it is, and genius of the highest order; and we now turn, not without a feeling of relief, from the consideration of his character to the consideration of his genius and poetry.

CHAPTER XI.

BYRON'S PLACE IN LITERATURE.

In the four principal orders of poetry the literature of England has produced four poets of unsurpassed genius: Shakespeare in dramatic, Milton in reflective poetry, so far as this may be regarded as a special class; Scott in epic, and Byron in lyrical poetry—the latter being understood in its most comprehensive sense as subjective poetry. That Scott wrote his chief works in prose and not in metrical form is a mere external distinction which may be disregarded in our estimate. Of these four great writers, Byron has the least organic connection with the literature of his country antecedent to his own time. In Shakespeare, the dramatic poetry of the nation in its gradual rise and progress attained its culmination; Milton, both politically and religiously, was the noblest expression of Puritanism; and in Scott the epic characteristics of Scottish national life and character found their last and best representative. In Byron we look in vain for a corresponding basis of his poetry; in his sudden rise, in his career, in his splendour and disappearance he resembled a meteor, as far at least as English literature is concerned. The chief material and food of his poetry, the point to which his nature gravitated, lay beyond the shores of England; hence he was deprived of nourishment from that mother-soil, in which the heart and works of

the poet most surely find the truest sustenance and the most stable peace. He had almost severed himself from his country, and his country in return all but renounced him; and it was, in fact, less his fault than his misfortune that he had to learn, how exile gnaws at the roots of existence. It was neither the lovely landscapes, nor the grand historical memories of his country, that fed his thoughts or sustained his aspirations. Neither the misty highlands and lochs of Scotland nor the green meadows of England, neither the civil wars of the Roses nor the adventures of England's navigators, filled his mind; but the Greek Archipelago, or the Lake of Geneva in its perennial cheerfulness and pomp of colour, or the political anomalies of Venice, which rose, despite of all these, to the rank of a great power influencing the destinies of nations. A citizen of the world among English poets, he winged his flight beyond the limits of his country, and in him, accordingly, Goethe hailed the herald of an universal literature. Hence his poetry has exercised a far deeper influence upon the literature of the Continent than upon that of his own country. He was himself not unconscious of this more continental than national position; his idea, at least, of writing a great poem in the Italian language, as soon as he felt himself master of its beauties, would seem to indicate this. Nine years, he thought, would be spent in acquiring this command of the language,—he would then see what he could do, and this should be his best work. Although this may have been no more than a passing thought, it is yet characteristic of his position, on the one hand to England and on the other to the Continent.

It cannot be said, that Byron loved to devote himself to English literature or to connect himself with it. Even with regard to books and their authors he had his caprices.

If we are to believe Leigh Hunt,[1] he did not even possess a Shakespeare or a Milton, because he had been accused of borrowing from them, and he would afford no pretext for such a charge. With Milton, of whom he speaks in no very respectful manner in 'Don Juan,'[2] he ventured to contend for the palm, in 'Heaven and Earth,' and 'Cain,'—'mysteries,' in which he entered on the domain of biblical poetry. With regard to Shakespeare, he was the only one who, as he could not fail to see, stood above himself; all other English poets he would have placed either beneath, or at the most on a level with himself. Shakespeare's greatness oppressed him. Goethe, we know, with noble candour confessed repeatedly, how much he owed to Shakespeare, and how he felt his own inferiority to him. Byron was incapable of such an admission; the greatness of Shakespeare excited in him only mortification and jealousy, and he gave vent to these feelings in censures as bitter as they were unjust. Even when he mentions him with praise, as in 'Don Juan,'[3] where he speaks of him as 'his British godship,' we find an undertone of secret spite, mockery, and jealousy. Thus he admits him, indeed, to be the most extraordinary of writers, but the worst of models;[4] he doubts whether he were really so great a genius as he is generally considered to be; fashion, he thought, had led to his over-estimation; he calls him a barbarian, and even ventures to assert, that the English have no Drama. Shakespeare and Milton have had, he says,[5] their rise, and they will have their decline. He told Lady Blessington, that Shakespeare owed one half of his popularity to his low origin, which with the great crowd covers a multitude of sins, and the other half to

[1] *Recollections*, p. 45. [2] Canto iii. stanza 91. [3] Canto xiv. stanza 75.
[4] Byron to Murray. Moore's *Life*, v. 202.
[5] Letter to Mr. Murray on *Bowles's Strictures on Pope*, vi. 368 (note).

the distance of time from which he is separated from us. Lady Blessington is, however, convinced, that he attacked and depreciated Shakespeare—which he did constantly in conversation—only to excite astonishment and irritate his countrymen, but that in his heart he sincerely and deeply admired him. Certainly there could scarcely be two natures more utterly opposed to each other than Shakespeare and Byron, as well with regard to their poetry as to their character.

Among the classic poets of England there was one only with whom he had any sympathy and for whom he entertained any respect—this was Pope. On this point he remained constant throughout his life, partly, perhaps, because he thus found himself in opposition to all his contemporaries. As a boy he had been fascinated with Pope's translation of Homer, and in his mature years he declared it to be unsurpassable. It is probable also that Pope was highly esteemed at Harrow, and was there recommended to be studied and imitated. When Byron was writing the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' he devoted himself to the study of Pope, knowing well, that he was giving to the world in that poem a companion piece to the 'Dunciad;' just as, at a later period, he placed his 'Hints from Horace' by the side of the 'Essay on Criticism.' From that time he allowed no opportunity to pass of praising Pope, of setting him up as a pattern, and even, in his waywardness, of ranking him above Shakespeare.[1] He lost all patience with those who detracted from Pope, and hoped that there would be two men, at least, of taste to support him in his defence of him; if not, he would fight it out alone, for that it was truly the best cause in the

[1] In another passage, however, he says, 'I shall presume to say, that Pope is as high a poet as Shakespeare or Milton.'—Letters on *Bowles's Strictures on Pope.* Moore's *Life,* vi. 376.

world. 'I have always regarded him,' he says in a letter to Moore,[1] 'as the greatest name in our poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek temple, with a Gothic cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish mosque, and all sort of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakespeare and Milton pyramids, if you please, but I prefer the temple on the Parthenon to a mountain of burnt brick-work.' In his first letter on Bowles[2] he pronounces him the most consummate, and the most moral of English poets, as the only one whose faultlessness has been made his reproach; the moral poet, indeed, of all civilisation, and as such he hopes that he will one day be the national poet of mankind. His poetry—he says again—is the book of life; that a thousand years will roll away before such a poet can be again hoped for in our literature. 'But it can *want* them—he himself is a literature.'[3] Byron thought even of raising a monument at his own expense 'to the national poet of mankind,' in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, from which he had been excluded because of his religion.[4]

It might seem, at the first glance, as if this excessive reverence must be a freak of fancy, to which he had accustomed himself from caprice or waywardness or the spirit of contradiction. But on closer consideration, we perceive that in many respects Byron was kindred in mind and character with Pope; and we have only to read Schlosser's critical estimate of the latter[5] to be convinced that Byron must have been, as if by an inner necessity, attracted to Pope. Pope was, in the first place, deformed and a Catholic—two circumstances which were at once

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 150. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 377. [3] *Ibid.* 413.

[4] [Pope was buried, according to the directions of his Will, in Twickenham Church.]

[5] *History of the Eighteenth Century* (*Geschichte des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*). Heidelberg, 1836, i. 442-448.

calculated to gain the sympathy of Byron. Pope, though he had a humpback, had a face of great beauty: Byron, however noble his countenance, had a deformed foot; and thus deformity combined with great beauty was in Pope and Byron the source of their great irritability, vanity, insincerity, and satirical temper. Pope, like Byron, suffered severely from the feuds and strifes of the literary world. Both poets also closely resembled each other in ambition and love of fame. Pope, in his generation, stood on the summit of Parnassus, like Byron in a later, and each, with the weapons of his satire, hurled down all aspirants from that height. Further, Pope was the poet of aristocratic society, in which he had gained a position, and was the acknowledged representative of the philosophy and morality recognised by this society; he preached self-love as the basis of practical wisdom, and versified the philosophy of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. 'As a satirist'—to use the words of Schlosser—'he brands all his enemies with his bitter and malicious wit, and turns into ridicule what he does not understand or approve. It is true, he scatters or annihilates herds of those miserable dunces who had accquired some importance, because the great world was unable to distinguish between what was good and what was bad. The grave and the learned, the severe and the simple, are equally the butts of his ridicule, and contemporaries, not individually but in whole troops, are held up to scorn.' Pope also was not free from the imputation of scepticism and deism, and hence gave great offence to his contemporaries, as Byron did from the same cause to his. The distinctive character of mankind,[1] as drawn by Pope, is peculiarly applicable to Byron, who must have

[1] This has been noticed also by the 'Rejected Addresses' (1855), p. 14 (note).

seen himself reflected in this as in a mirror; for instance in the following couplets:—

> Chaos of thought and passion all confused,
> Still by himself abused or disabused;
> Created part to rise and part to fall,
> Great lord of all things, yet a slave to all;
> Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.[1]

But the two poets were closely allied, not in their weaknesses only, but also in their excellences. With the effusions of his satire and his sceptical reflections Pope, like Byron, interspersed sublime thoughts and noble feelings; he is distinguished not only for his pungent wit, but also for his fancy, the soaring elevation of his conceptions, the supreme excellence of his diction, and his unsurpassed elegance. And yet Byron must have been conscious, that he himself surpassed Pope—and this, assuredly, was not the least agreeable side of his idolatry of Pope.[2]

It was with Pope that Byron connected his critical and æsthetical thoughts on the nature of poetry; it was Pope also, who was the occasion of his quarrel with Bowles, who, in his edition of Pope, published in the year 1807,[3] expressed, with unnecessary prominence, those

[1] *Essay on Man*, epist. ii. 13–18.

[2] 'Byron,' said Goethe, 'places old Pope so high, merely that he might have in him an impregnable wall, behind which he might take refuge. Compared to Pope, Byron was a giant, but to Shakespeare he was but a dwarf.'—Goethe's *Conversations with Chancellor Müller* (*Unterhaltungen mit dem Kanzler Müller*), i. 94.

[3] The Rev. William Lisle Bowles, who was born 1762 at King's Sutton (Northamptonshire), and died 1850 as Rector of Bremhill (Wiltshire), was a prolific writer in many walks of literature, and a poet highly esteemed by the Lake School, on whose rise and progress he exercised a considerable influence. It was his sonnets which, though few in number, contributed in a marked manner to bring back English poetry from French artificiality to the truth of nature.

critical principles which placed him in antagonism with the author whose works he edited. He was attacked at first, by Campbell, in his 'Specimens of British Poets;' and to Campbell he replied at length, in a letter which appeared as a pamphlet.[1] Already in the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' Byron had fallen on the unhappy editor of Pope, deriding him as 'the maudlin prince of mournful sonneteers.' Some years after the publication of the satire Byron met (1812) him at a dinner-party at Rogers's, when Bowles directed the attention of his assailant to the injustice he had done him by his misquotation; yet the meeting was, as Byron[2] himself confirms, on both sides most pleasant and agreeable. Notwithstanding this, Byron wrote in 1821 (after there had been abundance of time for his feelings to cool down) a letter to Mr. Murray (intended for publication) on Mr. Bowles's 'Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope,' in which, on occasion of the Pope controversy, he makes an attack on the character of Pope's editor. Before this he had written to Moore:[3] 'I mean to plunge thick into the contest upon Pope, and to lay about me like a dragon, till I make manure of Bowles for the top of Parnassus.' That Southey agreed with Bowles was an additional spur to Byron. In the controversy which had arisen, one of the chief points of dispute was the assertion made by Bowles and defended by the Lake School, that all images taken from nature are more beautiful and sublime than those which are derived from art, and are therefore, *per se*, more poetical. In reply to this, Campbell referred to the case

[1] 'The unvariable Principles of Poetry, in a Letter addressed to Thomas Campbell, occasioned by some critical Observations on his Specimens of British Poets, particularly relating to the poetical Character of Pope.'

[2] See Letter to John Murray, Esq., Moore's *Life and Works*, vi. 347 *et seq.*

[3] *Ibid.* v. 37.

of a ship, which, although an object of art, is an extremely poetical figure, and adapted, in an extraordinary degree, to the purposes of the poet. Bowles having in his rejoinder endeavoured to reduce the poetical character of the ship to natural causes, Byron takes up the argument and says: 'Mr. Bowles makes the chief part of a ship's poesy depend upon the "*wind*;" then why is a ship under sail more poetical than a hog in a high wind? The hog is all nature, the ship is all art, "coarse canvass," "blue bunting," and "tall poles;" both are violently acted upon by the wind, tossed here and there, to and fro, and yet nothing but excess of hunger could make me look upon the pig as the more poetical of the two, and then only in the shape of a griskin.'[1] From arguments such as these, which have not even the merit of being witty or humorous, no result can follow—discussion simply ceases. In the whole disputation Byron dwells on mere isolated and external points, and never approaches the subject in a philosophical spirit, so that the investigation of the question is throughout rambling and inconclusive. To a German, who is accustomed to see even æsthetical questions treated in a scientific manner, and who calls to mind, for example, Schiller's celebrated treatise on 'Natural and Sentimental Poetry,'[2] the controversy as conducted by Byron is tantamount to the winnowing of chaff. Byron will have nothing to do with 'orders of poetry,' and still less with an 'ordering of poets.'[3] Everything, he insists, depends on the execution; the best poet is he who best executes his work, whether he be a writer of tragedies or of sonnets. The subject which he chooses is quite indifferent and may be taken from nature or from arti-

[1] Byron's letter to Mr. Murray, vi. 366.
[2] Sämmtliche Werke (1844), x. 281–368.
[3] Byron's letter to Mr. Murray, vi. 367.

ficial objects; the poet, who shall succeed in making a good poem on a game of cards, is a greater artist than he who takes the forest for his subject. According to his view, the highest of all poetry is the ethical or didactic, because moral truth is the highest of all earthly objects; nothing can be more sublime, than to express in verse what the good and wise, what founders of religion, had taught in prose, and thereby make men happier and wiser. Imagination and invention, on which it is the fashion of the day to lay so much stress, are, he proceeds to say, the commonest of all attributes; an Irish peasant with some whiskey in his head imagines more, and invents more, than is requisite to furnish forth a modern poem, and yet such invention is nothing but a lie. 'If the essence of poetry must be a *lie*, throw it to the dogs, or banish it from your republic, as Plato would have done.'[1]

This, truly, is not an investigation of the nature of poetry such as becomes a great poet; nor can anything worthy result from an enquiry conducted in this fashion. Byron wrote a second letter against Bowles, which happily contains no discussions on the subject in question; it is simply polemical, and may be passed over without further notice especially as Byron himself, to avoid hurting Bowles's feelings, authorised its suppression. He permitted only the publication, as occasion might offer, of those passages in which his opponent—and especially his poem 'The Missionary'—is commended.[2] Byron never afterwards expressed himself on theoretical questions, and in all probability had never reflected connectedly upon them; some occasional remarks from his letters and journals we have already mentioned, and shall again return to them in the sequel.

[1] Letter to Murray, vi. 376.
[2] Compare letter to Murray, *Life*, v. 133.

It is quite in harmony with Byron's enthusiasm for Pope that he should have no respect for modern English poetry, and that he spoke of it as in a degraded condition, which he ascribed chiefly to its neglect of his idol, the 'nightingale of Twickenham.' He expressly includes his own poetry in this condemnation, and confesses, that though he had ever loved and honoured Pope's poetry, he had shamefully deviated in practice.[1] 'With regard to poetry in general'—he writes in a letter to Mr. Murray[2] — I am convinced, the more I think of it, that he (Moore) and all of us,—Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Campbell, I,—are all in the wrong, one as much as another; that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system or systems, not worth a d~~d~~n in itself, and from which none but Rogers and Crabbe are free; and that the present and next generation will finally be of this opinion.[3] I took Moore's poems and my own and some others, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, learning, effect, and even imagination, passion, and invention, between the little Queen Anne's man and us of the lower empire. Depend upon it, it is all Horace then, and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again I would mould myself accordingly. Crabbe's the man, but he has got a

[1] Observations upon an article in *Blackwood*, xv. 81.

[2] Moore's *Life*, iv. 63, 64.

[3] This was written at Ravenna, and sent to Murray April 21, 1821, but was not published, till a considerable time after Byron's death, in the edition of the *Life and Works*, 17 vols., 1832. With regard to the controversy itself, the right of it remained, it was generally thought, with Bowles, who showed himself a vigorous and able disputant. ['Bowles and Hazlitt,' says Mr. Elwin in his edition of Pope, 'were the only persons among the disputants, eminent or obscure, who showed any real comprehension of the subject.] Bowles wrote after Byron's death a very touching elegy entitled *Childe Harold's Last Pilgrimage*.—Moore's *Life*, vi. 225, 226.

coarse and impracticable subject, and Rogers has retired on half-pay and has done enough.' However much Gifford [1] may commend this passage as containing 'more good sense, feeling and judgment' than any Byron ever wrote, it is impossible to admit it to be an intelligent conception of the growth and development of English poetry. In the first place, the poetry of Scott, of Moore, of Wordsworth, and his own, though widely differing from each other, are thrown together in the most confused manner in this comparative estimate. That, relatively to the so-called classical age of Queen Anne—when French taste culminated in English literature—they were all revolutionary, is undoubtedly true; but only through such a revolutionary movement, going hand in hand with social and political changes, could the literature of England be brought back to the truth of nature, to originality, and to a distinctively national character. It must be admitted, that the so-called Lake School was a necessary link in this development, however little we may be disposed to sympathise with it, or assign to it a high rank. It need hardly be said, that Byron could have no sympathies in common with the 'pond-poets,' although he personally esteemed one or two among them; but their mutual antagonism had its foundation in the radical difference of character on both sides. The Lake School, secluding itself from society, stripped all social elements from poetry, reduced it not merely to the love and imitation of nature, but, overshooting its mark, in many cases to the trivialities of every-day life. This did not, however, prevent the Lake poets from imagining themselves the lessees of Poesy in her

[1] In the MS. copy of this letter Gifford appended the following note to this paragraph: 'There is more good sense, feeling, and judgment in this passage than in any other I ever read, or Lord Byron wrote.'—Moore's *Life*, iv. 64 (note).

prophetic functions. Without passion or true pathos, with their confined horizon and somewhat petty sphere of life, by their lapse too from radicalism, they were in every respect the very opposites of Byron; and though he pretended [1] highly to esteem moral, or didactic poetry, yet this species of poetry, so far as it was represented by the Lake School, called forth only his mockery and derision.[2] His hatred and scorn of this school, however, were most fiercely concentrated against Southey, who, he thought, had given him special personal grounds for his indignation. Soon after Byron had taken up his abode at the Lake of Geneva, Southey also made a tour through Switzerland, and on his return circulated, as Byron believed, the calumnious report, that Byron and Shelley were living in promiscuous intercourse with two sisters, one of whom was Shelley's

[1] 'In my mind the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth.'—Letter on *Bowles's Strictures on Pope*, vi. 309.

[2] He had a sincere esteem for Wordsworth; the third and fourth Cantos of *Childe Harold* show, as H. C. Robinson thinks (Diary, iii. 488), the influence, with regard to style, of Wordsworth, although nothing could be more opposite with regard to matter. The following interesting anecdote regarding Wordsworth is also given on the authority of Robinson: 'I was sitting with Charles Lamb when Wordsworth came in, with fume on his countenance, and the *Edinburgh Review* in his hand. "I have no patience with these Reviewers," he said; "he is a young man, a lord and a minor, it appears, who has published a little volume of poems; and these fellows must attack him as if no one may write poetry who does not live in a garret. The young man will do something if he goes on." When I became acquainted with Lady Byron, I told her this story, and she said, "Ah! if Byron had known that, he would never have attacked Wordsworth. He once went out to dinner where Wordsworth was to be; when he came home, I said, 'Well, how did the young poet get on with the old one?' 'To tell you the truth,' said he, 'I had but one feeling from the beginning of the visit to the end—*reverence!*'"'

In 'Sardanapalus,' particularly in the speech of Myrrha, act v. sc. i., some persons think they can discover the influence of the 'Excursion.' Compare Leigh Hunt's *Byron*, 77, 4to. 1828.

wife.[1] This wounded Byron on his tenderest side, and he never forgave it. But even apart from this, the mediocrity of Southey's talents,[2] his 'literary suicide,' and his political apostasy precluded the possibility of his ever gaining Byron's respect. He lashed the Laureate therefore in the bitterest and most unsparing manner, especially in the dedication to 'Don Juan,' and in the 'Vision of Judgment,' which is the bitter and witty parody of Southey's poem of the same name. Southey turned on Byron, as a reptile trod on spits out its poison; in true pharisaic spirit he attacked Byron not on the ground of his literary or political but of his moral transgressions. He denounced Byron as the founder of the 'Satanic School' in English literature; his poetry as a monstrous combination of lewdness and impiety, and Byron as a panderer for the youth of England. To this fresh indignity Byron replied by a challenge, which he intrusted (Feb. 1822) to his friend Douglas Kinnaird,—who however never delivered it.

His friendly feelings towards Sir Walter Scott may be regarded as the very counterpart to his hostile relations with Southey. Scott was not a disciple of Pope, any more than the poets of the Lake School, but contributed, perhaps, even in a greater measure than they did, to give the *coup-de-grace* to French taste in English literature. He fell back on Scottish national life, and threw himself into spheres, for which Byron, living as he did abroad, could

[1] See some Observations upon an article in *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Life and Works*, xv. 73 *et seq.*

[2] [Dr. Elze, who knows so much of English literature, has something to learn regarding Southey. A fuller acquaintance with his life and writings would, we feel sure, convince our author, that Southey upheld the calling of a man of letters with rare dignity and independence; that his poems abound in great and manifold beauties; and that he is a master, never surpassed, of English prose.]

scarcely have acquired any taste; in spite of his Toryism Scott sympathised really with the people, which Byron, the Radical, never could do. The antiquarian flavour of his poetry was just as little to Byron's taste. Yet for Scott the poet, as well as for the man Scott, Byron always cherished the highest esteem and affection; their friendship, however, it must be admitted, was never exposed to the severe trial of very long personal intercourse. He knew that Scott always continued to be one of his most generous critics, and his review of the third canto of 'Childe Harold' in the 'Quarterly Review'[1] gave him profound satisfaction. As Scott had taken up his cause, so he in return took up Scott's, and exhibited his character in the brightest light in the already-quoted letter to Beyle, which he wrote from Genoa in the latter years of his life. In this he does not, indeed, conceal that he has no sympathy with Scott's political opinions, but he acknowledges that Scott's Toryism was sincere, and in no wise servile; he says he is as nearly a thoroughly good man as man can be, because he knows it by experience to be the case; and he therefore prays Beyle to correct or soften in a later edition of his book, 'Rome, Naples, and Florence in 1817,' the passage relating to Scott, which had offended Byron and led to his writing this letter. The Countess of Blessington also states, that Byron frequently, and always with warmth and admiration, spoke of the works and character of Scott; and that tears came into his eyes while he spoke of him. Of all his friends Scott was, perhaps, the only one against whom he never uttered a flippant sneer, or aimed the darts of his sarcasm. He never rose up, he said, from reading the Waverley Novels, which always transported him to the land of his childhood,

[1] The October number of 1816, vol. xvi.

without feeling himself a better man. 'How applicable to Scott's works,' he said to Lady Blessington,[1] 'is the observation on Richardson's novels made by Madame du Deffand, in one of her letters to Voltaire: "La morale y est en action, et n'a jamais été traitée d'une manière plus intéressante. On meurt d'envie d'être parfait après cette lecture, et l'on croit que rien n'est si aisé."'

Next to Scott, Shelley was, perhaps, the poet for whom Byron entertained the sincerest respect. With the exception of applying to him the nickname of the 'Snake,' he never presumed to take any condescending familiarities with him or to banter him maliciously.[2] The sincerity of Shelley's convictions, his purity, his unselfishness, his high poetical aspirations, were not without their influence upon him. That Shelley, like himself, battled against the narrow-mindedness and insincerity of English Society, and hence had been ostracised by it, could only heighten his respect and kindle his sympathy. The attempt to extend the freedom, which England politically enjoyed, to religion and private life, was the rock on which Shelley split; he had not discovered, that in England the nation only is free, not the individual. In his struggle for the freedom of individuality he was entirely at one with Byron, but the ways through which these two poets strove to attain this end and consummation were very different. Byron could sympathise neither with Shelley's metaphysics nor with his predilection for classic mythology. Byron's foot never stepped beyond the arena, whereas Shelley winged his way to the ethereal region of dreams and visions,

[1] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 232.

[2] Shelley himself, however, notices one exception in his preface to *Julian and Maddalo*: 'Maddalo (i.e. Byron) takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out Julian's (i.e. Shelley's) taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known.'

and thus imparted to his poetry its unreal and shadowy character. While, therefore, we always find in Byron practical views of men and things, in Shelley we have abstractions only, and discover that the faculty of embodying them was utterly wanting to him; even his hatred against despotism and tyranny is thoroughly abstract. Scepticism had in Shelley passed into the positive form of pantheistic unbelief; that he actually boasted of atheism, which has been alleged, rests on no authentic evidence. Undoubtedly he confirmed Byron in his sceptical tendencies. He declared his entire agreement with 'Cain,' and considered it worthy of Milton. To Shelley also Byron owed some acquaintance with Goethe's 'Faust,' through which his poetry was led into the realm of spirits. Shelley possessed in the highest degree, what Wordsworth calls 'the vision and the faculty divine,' while he was utterly wanting in practical ability with regard to the things of this world and in the knowledge of man and life. It has been already intimated, that pure and unsuspicious as he was, he judged too favourably of the character of Byron; he saw him only in his nobler sides, the defects did not venture to show themselves in Shelley's presence. In spite of this, Shelley's friends were apprehensive lest Byron's influence should act detrimentally both on his character and his genius.[1] In his poem of 'Julian and Maddalo' Shelley portrayed himself and Byron; and in the 'Lines written among the Euganean Hills' he even went so far as to make Byron's life in Venice assume a highly poetical, almost a sublime form.[2]

[1] Shelley's *Poetical Works*, in one vol. 1840, p. 96. Note by Mrs. Shelley.

[2] In the preface to the poem of *Julian and Maddalo*, Shelley thus characterises Maddalo (Byron):—'He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness

Keats in his poetry lived, still more than Shelley, on what Hamlet calls the chameleon's dish—the air. He was a stranger also to those Faust-like emotions, and that hatred of tyranny which bound Shelley and Byron together, and he made a yet richer use of mythology. In mythology he sought beauty and the joy in beauty which he regarded as the end of poetry. While Keats lived, Byron was positively unjust towards him, and spoke contemptuously of his poetry. The news of his sad fate, and his premature death, first touched the tenderer feelings of his heart and softened his judgment. The notorious circumstance, that Keats was killed by a critique,[1] could not fail to excite Byron's sympathy, reminding him, as it did, of the review of his own 'Hours of Idleness.'

With regard to Rogers and Campbell, Byron, in accordance with his views of the excellence of the classic school, of course praised their poetry. Their merit, however, consisted principally in a noble and finished form; while in invention, in passion, in the creative faculty of giving embodiment to their conceptions, they are far inferior to Byron. In the true sense of the word they were scarcely poets; and he himself, on one occasion, while speaking of them, dwells on the broad distinction between poetical in-

to be proud; he derives from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passion and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men, and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud because I can find no other word to express the concentered feeling which consumes him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell.'

[1] *Don Juan*, xi. 60.

spiration and the making of verses. 'Rogers,' he once said to Lady Blessington, 'if he has not fixed himself in the higher fields of Parnassus, has, at least, cultivated a very pretty flower-garden at its base.'[1] If Rogers and Campbell exercised little influence on the direction and style of Byron's poetry, the same must also be said of Moore. It is, indeed, to us Germans a strange phenomenon, that two poets, like Byron and Moore, should be so long and intimately connected, without the genius of the one acting on that of the other: nay, rather that they should as poets pursue paths which never met or blended. Moore, indeed, in his 'Loves of the Angels,' dealt with one of the same subjects as Byron in his mystery of 'Heaven and Earth,' but there the similarity between these poems ceases. 'I remember reading somewhere,' said Byron,[2] 'a *concetto* of designating different living poets by the cups Apollo gives them to drink out of. Wordsworth is made to drink from a wooden bowl, and my melancholy self from a skull chased with gold. Now, I would add the following cups: —to Moore I would give a cup formed like the lotus flower and set in brilliants; to Crabbe a scooped pumpkin; to Rogers an antique vase formed of agate; and to Colman a champagne glass.' Campbell he passed over; but to him he might have given a polished crystal goblet.

This comparison briefly expresses, what we have attempted to show in our preceding remarks, that Byron not only belonged to no school, but that he was influenced, neither in the direction nor in the spirit of his poetry, by any of those contemporary poets with whom he was most closely and intimately connected. His relations to them were of a thoroughly independent and peculiar cha-

[1] *Conversations with Lady Blessington*, p. 352.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 355.

racter, and, in fact, he occupied an isolated position towards them all; the influences which may be discovered in his poetry come from foreign sources, from the poetry of Berni, the poetry of Goethe, through the help of Shelley and M. G. Lewis, and, as will be shown in the sequel, from the dramas of Alfieri. But notwithstanding this, plagiarism is the literary sin with which many English writers reproach him. Hunt even asserts, that the noblest and most beautiful images and descriptions of Byron are imitations. Dallas says, that Wright's 'Horæ Ionicæ' suggested 'Childe Harold,' while Galt complains that the idea was borrowed from him. He tells us, that on leaving England he began to write a poem, called 'The Unknown,' in the Spenserian stanza, descriptive of the scenes he visited, and that he showed the plan of it to Lord Byron during the voyage between Gibraltar and Malta. The 'Curse of Minerva' also owed its origin (so he says again) to a poem of his called 'The Atheniad,' which treated of the same subject, and which he sent in manuscript to Byron in Asia Minor, and received back through Mr. Hobhouse. Mr. Galt finally points out a passage in the 'Giaour,' which displays, he thinks, a remarkable similarity, both in thought and in execution, with a passage in one of his own dramatic sketches.[1] With regard to the plagiarism, so frequently charged against him, from Goethe in the opening lines of the 'Bride of Abydos,' he assured Lady Blessington[2] that he knew nothing of Mignon's song, as he was quite ignorant of German. The famous description of the shipwreck in the second Canto of 'Don Juan' is taken to the minutest particulars from accounts of actual shipwrecks, and the tragedy of 'Werner'[3] is pro-

[1] *Life of Byron*, p. 184.
[2] *Conversations*, p. 326.
[3] Compare Byron's preface to 'Werner.'

fessedly derived from a story in Miss Lee's 'Canterbury Tales;' in the latter cases Byron himself openly states the sources from which he had borrowed. Shakespeare also, as everyone knows, very frequently founded his plays on already existing dramatic pieces, or on some favourite novel of his time; yet it never occurred to anyone, except to his jealous contemporary Robert Greene, to accuse him, therefore, of being a plagiarist. With respect to the unconscious use and employment of the thoughts and images of others, Byron very rightly replied, that there is nothing new under the sun,[1] and that, as to this point, he was in the same position as every other poet. In order to be entirely original, he says, we must think as much as possible, and read as little as possible; but then we cannot learn to think without first reading much, and thus it becomes unavoidable, that the thoughts of others should be blended inseparably with our own, and should afterwards be expressed as our own. There is, to a certain extent, a spiritual atmosphere, in which all poets breathe, and in which a severance of what belongs to each is as unfeasible, as in the natural atmosphere. Or as the Catholic Church teaches the existence of a treasury of good works of supererogation, so we might speak of a treasury of supererogatory good thoughts, from which poets may borrow according to their need. With respect to Byron, the question as to the more or less of originality is of small moment. It was his practice to stimulate himself by the study of poems kindred in character with his own thoughts, and excite in himself the poetic vein. Thus the imitative impulse was stirred within him, and a note struck by another called forth in him the full chord, which was transformed by the action of his own soul into original

[1] Compare Journal (1813). Moore's *Life*, ii. 300.

music; and the ores which were thrown into the crucible of his mind, were there fused into a new metal.[1]

Byron's poetry has, indeed, one character so distinctive and original, that no doubt is admissible regarding it. In the second part of 'Faust' Goethe justly extols him for 'a song his very own.'[2] It was Byron who introduced world-sorrow (Weltschmerz) into modern literature, though for this distinctive characteristic of his poetical genius, the English, it may be remarked, have no expression, because they know not the thing. On the other hand, in the literature of Germany world-sorrow plays a far more important part. This world-sorrow rests primarily on the ever-present grief of the human race at the transitoriness of all things earthly, the gloomy destiny and uncertain lot of man: its basis is, as another poet[3] has recently expressed it,

Dieses Lebens höchster Schmerz;
Der Schmerz um dieses Leben.

This universal sorrow of humanity, however, assumes in Byron a subjective and, it cannot be denied, a morbid tone, inasmuch as he transports into it his own innate and acquired vacillation between extremes, his undefined

[1] Compare Moore's *Life and Letters*, pp. 521, 525; *Poetical Works*, p. 341; Lady Blessington's *Conversations*, pp. 130, 326, 363; Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age* (3rd ed. 1858), p. 272. Goethe defended Byron against the charge of plagiarism. 'All nature,' says he in reference to Byron, 'belongs to the poet; and every creation of art which genius originates becomes also a part of nature, and consequently every later poet may as freely use such works, as he may any other phenomenon of nature. Does not everything which men in former or in present time have done, belong of right to the poet? Why should he fear to pluck flowers where he finds them? Only by the appropriation of the treasures of others does anything great arise.'—*Conversations with Chancellor Müller*, pp. 94–98.

[2] Compare the Dirge for Euphorion, at the end of the third Act of the Second Part of 'Faust. *Werke*, xi. 376: also Bayard Taylor's Tran- ii. 275–6.

odor Fontaine, concluding verses of his 'Fair Rosamund.'

craving to signalise himself by great deeds, his unsatisfied longings, his oppressive isolation, his satiety produced by premature and excessive indulgence, his misanthropy and bitterness. It is true he is possessed with a feeling of the utter wretchedness of mankind, but too often this consciousness serves merely as a foil to his own. The soothing influence, which he finds in the great revelations of Nature, in the contemplation of the mountains, the seas, and the stars, is only momentary; even into their presence he carries his own misery and the universal misery; from their bosom in which he affects to rest, he is ever again scared, by his own unhappiness, like a wild animal pursued by hunters. The poetry in which he pours out his sorrows, is to him not a blessing but a curse, and he has as little joy in the creations of his own or of kindred art, as in the creations of Nature. He attains his greatest elevation, when he succeeds in merging his own in the universal misery, when surrendering himself to Nature, he finds therein the occasion for historical recollections and reflections. Hence it is, that the two last cantos of 'Childe Harold' are among his greatest and most matured creations.

It is intimately connected with the character of improvisation, which belongs to the poetry of Byron, that he could write only on the very spot, or at least that he must receive on the spot inspiration for his poetry, and then, almost immediately, *fervente calamo*, commit it to paper; he could not dispense with the immediate stimulus which he received from the external world. Thus we have seen, that the two first cantos of 'Childe Harold' were written during the pilgrimage itself, and the Greek Tales shortly afterwards, while his recollections were still fresh. The third canto of 'Childe Harold' was begun in Belgium and Switzerland, the fourth in Italy while the very scenes

were before him. He composed the poem of the 'Prisoner of Chillon' at Ouchy, just after returning from Chillon; the 'Lament of Tasso' at Florence, after he had visited Tasso's dungeon at Ferrara. The 'Prophecy of Dante' was composed at Ravenna, where he daily rode past Dante's tomb. 'Manfred' he began in Switzerland; 'Beppo,' the 'Two Foscari,' and 'Marino Faliero' he wrote at Venice. He often said, he could describe only what he had seen or experienced. He told Medwin, that there were plenty of descriptions of the plague from Boccaccio to De Foe, but that he had himself beheld it, and that actual vision transcended all descriptions. He once remarked of Leigh Hunt, that, until his residence in Italy, he had never travelled ten miles' distance from St. Paul's Church; and what could be expected for poetry from such a life? The striking examples in disproof of his argument Byron, indeed, either knew not, or would not know. To pass over the cases of Shakespeare and Scott, we need only think of Schiller's 'Tell' or Jean Paul's 'Titan' to be convinced that actual perception is by no means an indispensable prerequisite for the poet. Byron, it is true, has hence imparted to his poetry a powerfully realistic, not to say naturalistic element, the more so as he applied his principle not only to the world of nature, but also to the world of mind. According to his view, the poet, before he could describe them, should have experienced all feelings and passions; the poet should live his own poetry. The poet needs therefore either 'high life' or solitude; for only so can the life of action or contemplation be known. Mere invention is, he says, the talent of a liar, and all fictions were hateful to him which were mere fictions; even the most airy edifice demanded some foundation in fact. Outward and inward

rience form, in truth, the basis of Byron's poetry, and

his followers have both theoretically and practically followed the same path. Experience then wrought so powerfully on his mental organisation, that lightning-like it must discharge itself in verse. We know already his saying, that all convulsions end with him in rhyme.[1] What Japhet says of himself in the second scene of 'Heaven and Earth,' evidently describes Byron's own state of mind.

> —Peace! what peace? the calm
> Of desolation, and the stillness of
> The untrodden forest, only broken by
> The sweeping tempest through its groaning boughs;
> Such is the sullen or the fitful state
> Of my mind overworn.[2]

Byron has in this point formed a true judgment of himself; but it is surprising, that in his well-known definition of poetry[3]—'the feeling of a Former world and Future'—he left no place for his own poetry, as the feeling of the world of the present moment. All his poems were written, when the fit of inspiration was upon him, with the utmost rapidity and, as it were, at one cast; even the cantos of 'Childe Harold' and of 'Don Juan,' which came forth separately, not excepted. If the first attempt failed, he would never proceed to a second; and the recasting of the third act of 'Manfred,' which occasioned him extraordinary trouble, is the only example of a departure from this practice. He often says, 'I must either make a spoon, or spoil a horn.'[4] Yet more forcibly he compares himself to a tiger: 'If I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle again.'[5] For the same reason he never retained the recollection of what he had written; it came and went with the moment. Medwin,[6] on the

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 247.
[2] *Life and Works*, xiii. 14.
[3] *Diary*, 1821. Moore's *Life*, v. 89. Compare letter to the same, v. 281.
[4] Letter to Murray, iv. 305.
[5] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 229.

other hand, asserts that Byron could have quoted every line he ever wrote; this, however, is scarcely right. It is evident that Byron delighted in such tiger-like springs, and carried to an extreme the character of extemporaneity in his poetry. This manner had become with him a second nature, and he said of himself on a certain occasion that he was the 'very devil of a mannerist.'[1] Too often he strained after dazzling effects, and, as is usually the case, sacrificed to effect the calmer beauty of the composition.

With the exception of his more or less unsuccessful dramas, and, perhaps, of his two last tales, 'Mazeppa' and 'The Island,' Byron left no organic work of art; world-sorrow (Weltschmerz), as Auerbach[2] says, is incapable of creating a finished and harmonious work of art. Byron will be remembered longer by the lyrical pearls, which are scattered so copiously through his poems, gems which are familiar to every reader of his works, and can never be forgotten. It is in these that his muse takes her noblest flight; these are the portions of his poetry which are instinct with the most exquisite beauty, and exercise on us the most powerful spell; and we cannot imagine, that they will ever fail to fill their readers with rapture. We have already spoken of the fragmentary character of the Greek Tales, in which the most strikingly beautiful passages were strewn like grains of gold while the poems were passing through the press. Regarded merely as tales, they were as faulty as the dramas were considered from the dramatic point of view. Byron did not possess the faculty of weaving a story or of constructing a plot; he therefore always treated this as a

[1] Letter to Murray, iii. 357.

[2] See his treatise on Weltschmerz in his book: *Deutsche Abende. Neue Folge*, p. 399. 1867.

matter of subordinate interest. He knew well that his strength lay in picturesque description. 'Childe Harold' and 'Don Juan' also, form no connected and complete whole, no work of art in the æsthetical sense. They were conceived without plan, they arose fragmentarily, and might have gone on *in infinitum*: they end only through the exhaustion of the poet or the reader. With regard to the Dramas, their style is strongly contrasted with the entire absence of form in the above compositions; it is in his Dramas that Byron designedly returned to a severity of composition, already vanquished in literature—or to speak more correctly, to a cramped and fettered method of composition. We exclude, in the first instance, from our review those dramas, in which the agency of spirits is introduced, for these are not so much dramas as dramatic poems. In his historical dramas he has not only retained the classical fetters, especially the three unities, but he came forward as one of their most zealous defenders. It is clear, that in this he was influenced by the dramatic poetry of Italy, and particularly of Alfieri, with whom he was fond of comparing himself, especially in their aristocratic birth and position, in their passion for freedom, and in their numerous love affairs. We have already learnt, in one striking example, how greatly the dramas of Alfieri attracted and interested him; it cannot therefore surprise us that he selected Alfieri as his model. He was painfully conscious that in the free, or, to describe it in one word, the Teutonic drama, he could not venture to contend with Shakespeare. If he therefore desired to assume, as a dramatist, an independent position, worthy of his pride and his fame, he felt he must keep out of Shakespeare's way. But, notwithstanding this—or perhaps because of it—it is as a dramatic poet that he achieved the least success: the most one-sided of his

admirers cannot but admit, that his dramas are little removed from positive failures. He who could not act independently, but was determined almost always by external circumstances—and such was Byron—was utterly unfitted to describe an action springing from the distinctive character of the *dramatis personæ*. It has been repeatedly pointed out, that Shakespeare and Scott, though they have delineated a multiplicity of characters, have never drawn their own; whereas Byron, as a true lyric poet, had not the power of drawing a single character, save and except the caricature of his own. Even in his dramas it is ever his own image which, reflected in different lights, comes before us. In 'Sardanapalus' alone is there an instance of the development of character. Not less defective are the moving springs of the action. The different pieces are altogether destitute of dramatic life. That wondrous organic structure, in which the action, the interest, the catastrophe proceed by inner necessity from the interaction of all the different characters—and only of these—on each other, remained to Byron a mystery barred and closed. He could have learnt this from no poet better than from Shakespeare. The persons of his dramas act far too little on each other. Marina, for instance, the wife of the younger Foscari, overflows during the whole piece with revengeful feelings and frenzied hatred against the persecutors of her husband and the authorities and political institutions of Venice (she surpasses in her rage Queen Margaret in Richard III.); but no one is in the least degree concerned about her invectives; she might as well have been quite silent or altogether absented herself from the scene, without the development of the action or the conduct of the other persons being in the legree affected thereby. Even Barbarigo, the nstant companion of Loredano, is a super-

fluous figure; he is a feeble confidant in the style of the Classic French Drama. The subjects which Byron chose, especially the two he selected from Venetian story, are destitute of tragical incident, and are incapable of exciting either fear or pity: the last named are rather historical anecdotes—may we not say, curiosities of history?—which leave us cold and uninterested. For these defects, neither the language, in which we miss the elevation of true poetry, nor the structure of the verse, afford us any compensation. Byron, who had shown himself so great a master of the Spenserian stanza, could not with like perfection manage the metre of the drama, or make it flow harmoniously throughout; sometimes he is wanting even in force. He once said to Medwin, that blank verse was of all metres the most difficult, because every line must be good[1]—an opinion in which almost all English poets agree.

Thus in Byron's historical plays we find, in a word, all those well-known defects and weaknesses of the Romanic Drama, which have been exposed and crushed by German criticism; and yet he persisted in regarding them as a reform in dramatic literature. 'I want,' he says in a letter to Mr. Murray,[2] 'to make a *regular* English drama, no matter whether for the stage or not, which is not my object—but a *mental theatre*;' in the same letter he says[3] also: 'my dramatic simplicity is studiously Greek, and must continue so; no reform ever succeeded at first.' In another letter to the same correspondent he professes:[4] 'My object has been to dramatise, like the Greeks, striking passages of history, as they did of history and mythology. . . . . It has been my object to be as simple and

[1] *Conversations with Lord Byron*, p. 305.
[2] Moore's *Life*, v. 227.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 227.
[4] *Ibid.* v. 202.

severe as Alfieri, and I have broken down the *poetry* as nearly as I could to common language. The hardship is, that in these times one can neither speak of kings or queens without suspicion of politics or personalities. I intended neither.' And again to the same correspondent[1] he says: 'What I seek to show in the "Foscari" is the suppressed passions, rather than the rant of the present day.' It was partly from the spirit of opposition that Byron rated his dramas so highly, partly also from a motive which Shelley suggests,[2] namely, that 'authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble. Milton preferred his "Paradise Regained," Petrarch his "Africa," and Byron his "Doge of Venice."' At an earlier period of his life Byron made an attempt at a comedy, but threw it into the fire, when he discovered that he had no talent for this style.[3] It was then his declared opinion, that comedy is the most difficult of all forms of composition, more difficult even than tragedy.[4] Byron himself felt, that his pieces could not possibly succeed on the English stage, and vehemently opposed therefore their performance, mocking and reviling both the stage and the public, after the manner of the fox with the sour grapes. When in spite of his efforts to prevent it, 'Marino Faliero' was brought on the stage (May 1821), and proved unsuccessful, he proposed to take legal steps to prevent its repetition. His purpose, however, was never carried out; nor did he send the letter to the Lord Chamberlain which he had drawn up to the same intent.[5] He naturally ascribed the failure to various causes, but never to the right ones: the piece, he thought,

[1] Moore's *Life*, v. 248. [2] Compare Trelawny's *Recollections*, p. 77.
[3] Moore's *Life*, ii. 271, 254. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 300.
[5] Letter to Mr. Murray, v. 121.

was too long and did not admit of condensation; there was no love in it; had he wished to gain the applause of the public, he would have written a pantomime[1]—and more to the same effect. On the other hand, he prides himself in having adhered to history, and in having observed to the best of his ability the costume of the times. But he does not see, that the piece is nothing but a succession of long-winded declamatory dialogues between two or three persons, without a trace of the development of character, and almost without the conflict of tragedy. We fail to comprehend, how a motive so external and so insignificant could instigate the old Doge to a conspiracy against the state—against everything, which hitherto had been dear, or great, or sacred to him. Fidelity to history is insufficient to elevate such an event to the domain of tragic poetry, and stilted high-flown language is here of little avail.

This inflation of style is still more observable in the 'Two Foscari,' which, though it does not come next to 'Marino Faliero' in point of time, is yet most closely connected with it as to its subject-matter. The defects of this tragedy were seen and exposed by English critics, and by none more than by Jeffrey: and with their opinions our own accords. Jeffrey, especially, points out how strikingly the absurdities of the unities appear in this play. The whole interest of the piece centres in the return, in defiance of law, of the younger Foscari from banishment, an irresistible longing for home having made life in a foreign land insupportable to him. In order to obtain permission to return, he applied—again contrary to law—to the good offices of a foreign prince. The only means through which the poet could have made this

[1] Letter to Mr. Perry. Moore's *Life*, v. 137.

diseased and exaggerated home-sickness intelligible, and have enlisted our sympathy, would have been to present his hero to us in banishment, and to make us witnesses of the agonies of his longing desires, and the pining of his heart in exile. Instead of this, we find Jacopo Foscari returned and in Venice, and the torture awaiting him. The details of this torture are not only minutely described, but we even hear the tortured man groaning under the hands of the executioners. From a poet, who represents Shakespeare as a barbarian and as the worst of models, this was scarcely to be expected. The younger Foscari is again condemned to banishment for life, not to an inhospitable and uncivilised country, but to a charming island of the Mediterranean, whither his wife is permitted to accompany him. In spite of these ameliorations of his sentence his destiny appears to him so exceedingly dreadful, that in the moment of his departure he faints and dies! His father, the Doge, is deposed from his office, and when he has to leave the Palace of St. Mark, dies also of a broken heart. The author of all this misery is the Senator Loredano, who, without any sufficient ground, and in spite of the most positive denials of Foscari, has taken it into his head, that his own father and uncle have been removed by poison by the elder Foscari, and therefore rests not until he has destroyed the Foscari family. With motives so forced and insufficient, and with characters so strained and unnatural, it is impossible that readers should be affected and interested.

Higher in many respects than these two Venetian dramas stands 'Sardanapalus,' the lyrical matter of which is more in harmony with the poet's own nature, and permitted him to throw his own individuality, which he had to repress in the above-mentioned plays, fully and warmly into the

piece. The Countess Guiccioli[1] thinks 'Sardanapalus' a 'conception plus noble encore que Hamlet;' she was probably won to this judgment by the lyrical beauties of the piece, and still more by the likeness of the portraits—for the hero is unmistakably Byron, and Myrrha is evidently the Countess, and the relation of Sardanapalus to his queen Zarina bears some resemblance to that of Byron to his wife. Sardanapalus is a weakling, who stimulated by rebellion rouses himself from his life of luxury to deeds of heroism and dies with honour. His effeminacy, disguised under a garb of nobleness and amiability, his selfishness, his contempt for mankind, allied at the same time with generosity, his vanity, and even the final rousing of his slumbering energies—these traits are all thoroughly Byronic. The vanity of Sardanapalus impels him to send for a mirror, that he may contemplate himself arrayed in his armour. Byron, indeed, remarks, that this was a historical trait of the Emperor Otho: but withal he does not deceive us as to the original. In the fourth act of the play, Sardanapalus-Byron describes himself in the following lines:

> I am the very slave of circumstance
> And impulse—borne away with every breath!
> Misplaced upon the throne—misplaced in life.
> I know not what I could have been, but feel
> I am not what I should be—let it end.[2]

Myrrha's farewell to her native Ionia comes also from the poet's own heart.

> Then farewell, thou Earth!
> And loveliest spot of earth! farewell, Ionia!
> Be thou still free and beautiful, and far
> Aloof from desolation! My last prayer
> Was for thee, my last thoughts, save one, were of thee.[3]

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[1] i. 29. French edition. [2] *Sardanapalus*, act iv. sc. i., xiii. 160.
[3] *Ibid.* act v. sc. i., xiii. 194.

Throughout the play there runs side by side with these lyrical effusions, the scepticism of Byron and his hatred against the priesthood. Arbaces the warrior, and Beleses the priest, are not so much characters as types.[1]

The only drama of Byron's which had any enduring success on the stage is 'Werner,'—'dedicated to the illustrious Goethe by one of his humblest admirers'—a sensational piece after the manner of the German Ritter und Räuber romances. In this play, scarcely anything belongs to Byron but its dramatic form; it is an avowed appropriation;[2] and according to the opinion of English critics, Byron's delineation of the characters is inferior in power and fulness to the original.

'The Deformed Transformed' is also professedly borrowed—though not to the same extent as the tragedy of 'Werner'—from the romance of 'The Three Brothers,' by Joshua Pickersgill (1803). In this drama the influence of Goethe is very discernible, and Byron[3] himself described it as 'Faustish.' 'How do you like it?' said Byron to Shelley. 'Least,' he replied, 'of anything I ever saw of yours.' It is not a regular drama—in the proper sense—but is made up, in a considerable measure, of lyrical pieces, more or less arbitrarily introduced. It could the less reckon on success as the two elements, the lyrical and the 'Faustish,' had already reached their

[1] When the discoveries of Layard were directing the attention of the world to Nineveh and had filled the British Museum with Assyrian monuments, Charles Kean in the year 1853 brought 'Sardanapalus' on the stage. Decorations, costumes, music—everything was Assyrian. The success answered every expectation, and the drama continued for a long time to be an attraction on the stage. Taglioni transformed it into a ballet, and the Baroness de Maistre into an opera. See *Athenæum*, Dec. 22, 1866, p. 847. This drama has also been translated into Greek.

[2] See the original preface to the play.

[3] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 227.

culminating point in 'Manfred,' the earliest in point of time of Byron's dramas. Byron was so little acquainted with German, that he could not read 'Faust;' even Marlowe's play of the same name, he assures us, he had not read. Shelley and M. G. Lewis had, however, in Switzerland, given him an analysis of Goethe's work; the fragments of translation by the former were inserted only at a later period among his works.[1] Both Shelley and Byron were profoundly impressed by Goethe's masterpiece; they had already learnt from their own experience, that the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life, and Goethe's 'Faust' led them into the world of spirits,[2] where they hoped to find the inward tumult of their own minds either expressed or soothed. The mysterious spell of the Alpine world, the powerful impression which it made on him, Byron now amalgamated with the Faust legend. He added a third element—the secret consciousness of guilt, which he attributed to Manfred, as he had already attributed the same dread feeling to the heroes of his Tales. This third element, which we find in 'Manfred,' Mrs. Beecher Stowe uses as a corroboration of the terrible charges, to which allusion has so frequently and so painfully been made. But the revolting charge is not even novel, as the following passage from Galt shows: 'The whole poem has been misunderstood, and the odious supposition that ascribes the fearful

[1] [Shelley translated two scenes of 'Faust;' the Prologue on 'Heaven,' and 'Walpurgis-Night;' the translation of the former was first published in the volume of Posthumous Poems (1824), that of the latter in the 'Liberal,' No. I. p. 121-137.]

[2] Some other German influences may also have contributed to the same result. Schiller's 'Geisterseher' had been brought before his mind at Venice in a very forcible manner, and through the works of M. G. Lewis, as well as by personal intercourse with him, and also by the above-mentioned *Fantasmagoriana*, he had become acquainted with the spirit of German sensational romances.

mystery and remorse of the hero to a foul passion for his sister, is probably one of those coarse imaginations, which have grown out of the calumnies and accusations heaped upon the author.'[1] 'How can it have happened,' asks Galt, 'that none of the critics have noticed that the story is derived from the human sacrifices supposed to have been in use among the students of the black art?'[2] The shedding of blood is, indeed, alluded to in the drama, and Goethe found in this a confirmation of the story of murder at Florence, which had been circulated against Byron. But Goethe and Mrs. Stowe are both in error. The allusions, which are so mysteriously expressed, are far too vague and indefinite to justify any inference derivable from the circumstances of his own life. It pleased his fancy to excite a belief in guilt which he had not committed. 'The hero,' he writes to Murray,[3] 'is a kind of magician who is tormented by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left half unexplained.' If, as cannot be any longer doubted, Byron was aware of the atrocious crime with which he was charged, it well accorded with his habit of imagining the consequences of guilt, that he should place himself in the position of a person in whom such guilty love existed.[4] Besides, his scepticism led him to the conclusion, that if the human race were descended, according to the Bible, from one pair, it could only have been propagated by marriage between brothers and sisters. Accordingly, in 'Cain' he represents the two brothers Cain and Abel as married to

[1] *Life of Byron*, p. 213. [2] *Ibid.* p. 214. [3] Moore's *Life*, iii. 345.

[4] How far this tendency of Byron's went is proved by the following fact. During the voyage from Constantinople to Athens, on board the frigate 'Salsette,' he observed on the deck a small yataghan, which he drew from its sheath, and looking on the blade said, 'I should like to know how a person feels after committing a murder.' Moore's *Life*, i. 337; Galt's *Life*, p. 155.

their twin sisters Adah and Zillah. Lucifer declares to Adah, that though her wedded love to her brother Cain was no sin, yet

> It one day will be in your children.[1]

Adah, justly astonished at this, and unable to comprehend it, replies—

> What is the sin which is not
> Sin in itself? Can circumstance make sin
> Or virtue?

The question, doubtless, had been debated also between Byron and Shelley. The latter at any rate, it is well known, could not be convinced that marriage between brother and sister was absolutely sinful, and appealed to antiquity, to the Ptolemies, and to other examples. Yet no one was further from the intention of transferring a theoretical question to the domain of practice than Shelley, especially as it involved in Byron's case a twofold adultery. Thus, what in 'Manfred' might appear obscure and questionable admits of a natural explanation. The relation of 'Manfred' to 'Faust' Goethe himself characterises in the following words: 'This poet, so eccentric and full of genius, has adopted my "Faust," and in a somewhat hypochondriacal manner has extracted from it the strangest food. He has employed the motives which suit his own ends in an original manner, so that nothing in his composition is any longer the same, and on this very account I cannot sufficiently admire his genius. It is such a remoulding, not of parts, but of the whole, that many interesting lectures might be delivered on this and on the resemblance to the original; but with all this, I do not deny that the dark and gloomy passion of boundless despair in "Manfred" becomes at last oppressive.

[1] *Cain*, act i. sc. i., xiv. 37.

Yet the dissatisfaction that is felt is ever associated with admiration and reverence.'[1] One important difference between 'Manfred' and 'Faust' Gottschall very rightly points out: Manfred does not yield to the devil; he vanquishes him and all the powers of hell by the conscious might of the human spirit.[2]

> My past power
> Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
> But by superior science—penance—daring,
> And length of watching—strength of mind—and skill
> In knowledge of our fathers—when the earth
> Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
> And gave ye no supremacy; I stand
> Upon my strength—I do defy—deny,
> Spurn back and scorn ye.
> . . . . . .
> Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
> Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know.[3]

Thus triumphantly does Byron vindicate the spiritual might of man in the face of the powers of hell. No wonder, then, that 'Manfred,' with its vigorous and soaring thoughts, and with the copiousness of its sublime images, made an extraordinary impression, and especially in Germany; and that, amid these excellences, its want of the clearness and plastic force of Goethe was overlooked.[4] But again, with 'Manfred,' as with 'Childe Harold' and some other of his poems, it was Byron himself who seemed incapable of judging his own work truly: he knew not whether it would succeed or not, and had no measure which could be applied to what was a result of his rhapsodical creation. He did not, like Goethe, stand above his poetical creations, but in them,

[1] Goethe's *Werke*, xxvi. 428. Stuttgart, 1858.

[2] Byron und die Gegenwart. *Unsere Zeit*, Oct. 1866, p. 497.

[3] *Manfred*, act iii. sc. iv., xi. 69–70.

[4] 'Manfred' has been repeatedly performed in the theatres of Germany, for instance, at the beginning of 1868, at Munich, with the music for it written by Robert Schumann.

and in them the whole of his sympathetic and lyrical nature was merged. We have already spoken of the re-casting of the third act of this play.[1]

We now come to the so-called mysteries 'Cain,' and 'Heaven and Earth.' If 'Manfred' be tinged with scepticism, scepticism showed an unabashed front in 'Cain,' while, on the other hand, the consciousness of mysterious guilt disappears. Like a lion impatiently beating against the iron bars of his cage, so Byron precipitates himself in this poem on the mysteries of revealed faith. He never, indeed, succeeds in bursting his cage; rather he remains in a state of indecision, and never comes to a positive conclusion in either direction. To Englishmen this scepticism was, with few exceptions, an insurmountable stone of offence. In England freedom of action is cramped by the want of freedom in thought; the converse is the case with us Germans, freedom of thought is restricted by the want of freedom in action. To us this scepticism presents nothing in the least degree fearful; we, like Faust, are afraid neither of the devil nor of hell. 'If,' says Goethe,[2] 'Byron would write a Cain, he must treat him as Cain, or not at all.' By the critics in England the whole play was blamed as savouring of Manichæism; to their remarks Scott[3] replied very rightly, that it is extremely natural that Lucifer should speak as a Manichæan; but at any rate, he could not, as Byron says in his preface, speak like a clergyman. He also does not speak like the devil, but is endowed with a fulness of spiritual and attractive power, which has been made a

[1] The publication of an Italian translation of 'Manfred' by an incapable hand Byron prevented, by purchasing the MS. for 200 francs; at the same time he got from him a written promise to prepare no other translation of any of his works.

[2] *Werke*, xxvi. 433. Stuttgart, 1858.

[3] Letter to Mr. Murray.

reproach to the Satan of Milton. Lucifer is the arch-priest of the scepticism, which in Cain attains its *acme*. Cain is by no means wicked, either before or after the murder; he is not envious, nor unfeeling, nor hateful, nor revengeful. He is a loving husband and a tender father; his behaviour towards his brother and his parents is indeed, less tender, but it is so, only because they, full of faith and humility, accommodate themselves to their destiny and refuse to listen to his scepticism. He censures Abel's sacrifice, because Abel kills the firstlings of his flock, and thus occasions suffering to them and to their mothers—of such tenderness is his heart, just as the heart of the poet himself. Cain's own offerings consist of fruits. His only fault is, as has been said, scepticism, and it is this which leads to the murder of his brother. So far it is inconceivable how the poem could be regarded in England as irreligious or immoral. By their fruits ye shall know them; if, then, murder is the fruit of scepticism, it is clear that Byron did not represent it as a thing moral and worthy of imitation. That Byron has not treated the subject with the objectivity of Milton, but with the mouth of Cain utters his own scepticism, is undoubtedly not to be denied. Scepticism also almost exclusively leads and fills the dialogue; dogmatism is feebly represented only in the person of Adah. Englishmen felt this instinctively, and Byron's repeated cautions and asseverations, that the religious views of the persons of his dramas were not his, were quite unavailing. Even Hobhouse, according to Medwin,[1] protested against 'Cain,' and would not have it printed for any consideration. Byron appealed to the mysteries and moralities of the Middle Ages, in which, indeed, many questionable things

[1] *Conversations*, p. 187.

were exhibited; but these were the products of unconscious simplicity, whereas Byron's poetry is in every line the very reverse. While in the Middle Ages, and still more in Milton, the story and its poetic composition were the main points, the dramatic form is with Byron only a vehicle. 'Cain,' in fact, is anything but a drama, and is not intended to be one, although it is not wanting in dramatic beauties, among which the scene in which Cain strikes the death-blow is supreme. It is Cain himself who brings death into the world, which before appeared to him as a mighty yet unknown object of dread, and which furnished such ample food for his scepticism.[1]

In 'Cain' the storm of his scepticism to a certain extent spent itself; in the fragment 'Heaven and Earth,' written a few months afterwards, it mutters only faintly in the person of Aholibamah, the descendant of Cain. Here poetry again asserts its rights as opposed to metaphysical reflection. The fermenting chaos of the elements and the passions of men scarcely permit scepticism to speak, and gleams of devout resignation are unmistakably to be traced in the scenes of the poem. It is as if doubt and revolt must become dumb before the might and sublimity of the Deluge. The intended continuation and conclusion of this mystery-play the poet sketched in one of his conversations with Medwin,[2] and it is to be deplored that he did not carry out the plan. Goethe thought 'Heaven

[1] 'If I am not mistaken,' says Moore (*Life*, v. 318), 'it (Cain) will sink deep into the world's heart; and while many will shudder at its blasphemy, all must fall prostrate before its grandeur.'

'A Frenchman—writes Goethe—Fabre d'Olivet, has translated "Cain" into blank verse, and thinks he has refuted it in a series of philosophico-critical remarks. The *Moniteur* of Oct. 23, 1823, on the other hand, defends the poet.'—Goethe's *Werke*, xxvi. 431. Recently, 'Cain,' with a revised text, has become an oratorio, under the hands of Max Zenger, and has been repeatedly performed at Frankfort on the Maine (1869–70).

[2] P. 234 *et seqq.*

and Earth' 'more intelligible, clearer than "Cain," which was too profound in its thoughts, too bitter, although fascinating, bold, and sublime.'[1] According to H. C. Robinson, Goethe preferred this fragment to all the other poems of Byron; he thought that a bishop might have written it, and deplored that Byron had not lived long enough to dramatise the whole of the Old Testament.[2]

We have still to glance at 'Don Juan,' Byron's last and, in many respects, greatest poem. That he began the work without a definite plan, and at last did not know what he should do with his hero, would be apparent from every canto, even if Byron had not admitted it in so many words to Murray. 'You ask me,' he writes, 'for the plan of Donny Johnny. I have no plan; I had no plan.'[3] It is, therefore, foolish to say that the poem, according to the original plan, was to consist of twenty-four cantos; it was not, in fact, constructed on a plan. According to some, 'Don Juan' was to end as a Methodist; according to others, he was to die under the guillotine during the French revolution.[4] Byron himself says in joke, 'I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage, not knowing which would be the severest.'[5] 'Don Juan' is no epic; all the changing hues of every form of poetry are reflected in it; it strikes every chord and runs through every key; if any element be wanting in it, that element is the epic. In 'Don Juan,'

[1] *Conversations with Chancellor Müller*, p. 69.

[2] *Diary*, ii. 434 *et seqq.* 'Cain,' 'The Vision of Judgment,' 'Heaven and Earth,' and 'The Deformed Transformed,' were all written in the year 1821, and, so to speak, from one inspiration. 'Heaven and Earth' was written in fourteen days.

[3] Moore's *Life*, iv. 282.

[4] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 246 *et seqq.* Lady Blessington's *Conversations*, p. 206.

[5] Letter to Mr. Murray, Moore's *Life*, v. 127.

Byron expresses with all his force and fulness the unrest and tumult of his own passions, the instability of his opinions, his bitterness and misanthropy, his remorse and despair—in one word, his world-sorrow. He tells no story into which he does not introduce himself and his own thoughts; he never utters a reflection which he has not drawn from his own experience. Hence for this, if for no other reason, Byron is quite wrong when he compares 'Don Juan' with the 'Iliad.' 'If you must have an epic,' he said, 'there is "Don Juan" for you. I call that an epic; it is an epic as much in the spirit of our day as the "Iliad" was in Homer's.' But Homer was in his epics the representative of the Greek national mind; he only expressed what the whole Greek people thought, believed, and felt; whereas Byron in his 'Don Juan' is only his own representative, and expresses nothing but what he himself thought and felt on the world. He professes, indeed, to describe the world, and that this is the special object of 'Don Juan;' he makes an assertion, however, when he made this profession—that he is indifferent whether the world will read it or not—which admits of considerable doubt. No poet, it must be confessed, exercised such a sovereign command over matter, form, and language, as Byron in this poem; it is, with respect to language and metre, such a triumph as the world can hardly furnish a second like it. The judgments of criticism are unanimous in recognising these excellences of the poem; here there is no difference of opinion. But the immorality! from this charge, alas! he cannot be cleared. Women have always been instinctively repelled by 'Don Juan.' The Countess Guiccioli, who had read the first two cantos in a French translation, was so offended, that after the com-

[1] Medwin's *Conversations*, p. 247.

pletion of the fifth canto, she extorted from Byron a promise that he would not continue it. And in fact he remained silent, till she permitted him to go on, '*provided* always that it was to be more guarded and decorous and sentimental in the continuation than in the commencement.'[1] When Byron expressed his conviction to the same lady that 'Don Juan' would outlive 'Childe Harold,' she replied: 'Ah! but I would rather have the fame of "Childe Harold" for three years, than an immortality of "Don Juan."'[2] Byron's sister also wrote to tell him,[3] that she had heard that 'Don Juan' was execrable, and that she would never read it. The outcry in England was, in fact, universal, although, foreseeing this, he had published the first two cantos anonymously. He was not without apprehension that the Court of Chancery might deny to him, as it had denied to his friend Shelley, his paternal rights over his daughter Ada; and his daughter, he said, was more precious to him than any poem could be. These fears, however, happily proved unfounded. The sale of the first two cantos was comparatively small, and Murray complained the more, as a piratical edition was immediately published in Paris, and he feared, lest the legal authorities would refuse to protect his rights as publisher as they had in the case of 'Cain.' Byron therefore offered to refund the *honorarium*.'[4] The descriptions of sensual love, which assuredly go very far, formed the principal ground of complaint. Byron,[5] in reply to this, appeals to 'Tom Jones,' 'Roderick Random,' 'Peregrine Pickle;' to Dryden, Prior, Congreve, Pope, and many others; and exclaims to Murray, 'why, man, the soul of such writing is its license.'[6] Although it is evident that Byron delights in the description of sensual pleasures,

[1] Letter to Mr. Murray, Moore's *Life*, v. 348. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 354.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 118. [4] *Ibid.* iv. 261. [5] *Ibid.* [6] *Ibid.* iv. 182.

and exhibits to us, in this poem, hardly any other female characters but those of a voluptuous cast, we cannot in these descriptions in themselves discover immorality. The immorality lies rather in the cynical nihilism that pervades the whole poem, which destroys the difference between good and evil, between right and wrong, between the beautiful and the repulsive, and degrades all things alike to the meanest level—everything, in short, but sensual pleasure. This is the only thing which escapes the lash of his ridicule. Martial fame, the renown of great deeds, is nothing; history calls these sometimes 'murder,' sometimes 'glory.'[1] Poetic fame is nothing; 'a name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.'[2] Enthusiasm is nothing; even his own is mocked at, just as, after him, Heine laughed at his own. Love is nothing:

> Love is vanity,
> Selfish in its beginning, as its end,
> Except where 'tis a mere insanity.[3]

Science is nothing: Socrates and Montaigne are right when they teach, that

> our only knowledge was
> To know that nothing could be known.[4]

and, as it is said in 'Manfred,'[5]

> they who know the most
> Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
> The tree of knowledge is not that of Life.

Thus his satire storms against every form of life, political, religious, social, and literary. Where now the place for 'well-recorded worth' such as Childe Harold sung?[6] What consolation now in the 'eternal beauty of Nature?'[7]

[1] *Don Juan*, canto vii. 20.
[2] *Ibid.* canto i. 218.
[3] *Ibid.* canto ix. 73.
[4] *Ibid.* canto vii. 5.
[5] Act i.
[6] *Don Juan*, canto ii. 85.
[7] *Ibid.* canto ii. 87.

The ultimate conclusion is, that 'this life is not worth a potato,' as so many from Solomon and Plato, to Machiavelli and Rousseau, have seen.

> We live and die,
> But which is best, you know no more than I.[1]

But there is this difference that, what these expressed in elegiac lamentations, appears in Byron as fierce, defiant, mocking, wrathful satire. Herein lies the originality and creative power of his genius. The theme of Solomon, 'all is vanity,' is pushed to such an extreme, that the contrary effect is produced, and nihilism is self-destroyed. May we not say, that henceforth this tendency in poetry becomes through 'Don Juan' an impossibility? for never in this direction can 'Don Juan' be exceeded. If 'Don Juan' still be called an epic, it must, then, be described as the epic of Epicurean Nihilism—Epicurean, in so far as sensual pleasures and joys are alone exempted from the general nothingness of the world. This is the issue which the critical, not the general, reader discovers, least of all the youthful reader, to whom, therefore, 'Don Juan' must undeniably be dangerous; as long, at least, as he does not rise above its principles and until he refuses to accept the point of view of that poem. Goethe declares 'Don Juan' to be the most immoral work which poetic art ever produced; without alleging, however, the grounds on which he expresses so severe a judgment. He recommends all translators, for improvement in their art, to exercise their ability upon it, although, for the sake of morality, he would object to the publication of their translations. 'Don Juan,' is, he admits, a work of boundless creative power; and, 'once we know and estimate the poet rightly and take him for what he is, we enjoy

[1] *Don Juan*, canto vii. 4.

thankfully what he ventures with such amazing freedom, nay audacity, to set before us. The technical treatment of the verse is thoroughly in accordance with the strange, wild, reckless matter of the poem; the poet spares language as little as he spares man.'[1]

We have said, that Byron advanced beyond negation, neither in politics nor in religion, and that in this lay his weakness, but also his strength; for upon this spirit of negation depended the whole of his almost overpowering influence on the intellectual and political development of the time in which he lived.[2] After the overthrow of the tyrannical power of Napoleon by the allied nations—for to the allied nations more than to the allied sovereigns that power had yielded—Europe, with the exception of England, was in a state of fermentation and internal dissolution. Mighty commotions and changes had taken place not only in the political state of Europe, but also in all its social, ecclesiastical, and literary relations, and everywhere men's minds sought to discover new forms for new views, and thus satisfy the new wants of the times. It was requisite that the new wine should be poured into new bottles. To this necessity, which historical events imposed, the governments of Europe arrayed themselves in opposition: they sought to arrest the wheels of time and progress; they cleaved blindly and convulsively to the worn-out institutions of the past, which were to be restored and maintained at all hazards. Instead of the domination of the foreigner came absolutism from within by the grace of God—the Bourbons, who had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, and the German Electors (*Kurfürsten*), with their professions of seven years' sleep.[3]

[1] *Werke*, xxvi. 426, 427. Stuttgart, 1858.

[2] Compare Treitschke's treatise: 'Lord Byron and Radicalism,' in his *Historical and Political Essays* (1865), pp. 313-355.

[3] When the Elector of Hesse returned to Cassel after the expulsion

The Holy Alliance considered it not unholy to leave unfulfilled the promises given to nations in the hour of trial, to beat down by force of arms their right to self-government which had been bought at the price of much precious blood, and to treat nations at their congresses like herds of cattle. What, then, was left to them but to turn against their governments the same spirit of opposition with which they had met the Cæsarism of Napoleon? What could be expected but the increasing passion for a radical revolution in all the institutions of their political systems, even if such a revolution had to be purchased at the expense and risk of violent convulsions? Thus revolutionary opposition to the subsisting order of things became a necessity—a period of transition in the development of Europe. To this opposition and this passion for radical change Byron lent the aid of the most powerful and impetuous expression. The state of the world was one great dissonance, and Byron, who possessed the special organ of its expression, became the poet of this crisis. 'When the policy of the Holy Alliance,' says Gervinus, 'believed that it had arrested for ever the aberrations of the spirit of revolution by the subjugation of France, then this English poet knit again the thread, which a million of soldiers had been called forth to sever for ever. American republicanism, German free-thinking, French love of revolution, Anglo-Saxon radicalism seemed to live again in the genius of this one man.' A connected system of thought was not what was wanted: this was supplied from other sources. Men were content to find their own feelings expressed in Byron, and his high rank and independent social position imparted to his radicalism

of King Jerome, he said he had only slept seven years; meaning by this that he intended to re-establish everything exactly as it had been before.

a greater weight and a more seductive and contagious brilliancy. That he had sacrificed his life for Greece and freedom surrounded his name with a halo of glory: this martyr-death became an inspiring theme for poetry and passion. Philhellenism, of which Byron had been the chief hero and support, extended its influence in ever-widening circles, and the minds of men, becoming enthusiastic for the liberty of others, learnt an enthusiasm to struggle for their own. Dissatisfaction with the general condition of things, amid the conscious impotence to ameliorate it, the recollection of the noble spirit of sacrifice which had been called forth, the flagrant contradiction between the lofty enthusiasm of the War of Liberation and the poverty of its results in effectuating the desired reforms, the want of an appropriate field for the passion of distinction which had been evoked,—all this generated that profound spirit of discontent, that revolutionary bitterness, which harmonised with Byron's world-sorrow, and which was most eloquently expressed in the literature of almost all the countries of the Continent. These were the chords of which Byron struck the key-note; here his passion, political and poetic, fanned into flame the mouldering embers; for literature became almost the only arena of action to the nations of Europe which were excluded from political life; politics were thus forced into poetry, and Byron became the standard-bearer of political poetry, which exercised the most important influence on the formation and strengthening of public opinion. To this political poetry belongs in no small degree the merit of having gradually led men, from their original negative opposition to the attainment of positive results; it was, at least, one among the co-operating elements which led to this. As public opinion began to regulate political events and attained the rank—to repeat a much-used

expression—of being the sixth great power, one post after another was gained for the participation, ordained by law, of the people in the affairs of the state, and in the administration of national resources. This is not the place to exhibit the formative elements, or trace out the tangled threads of the history of our own times, but two great facts, intimately connected with Lord Byron, must be referred to—facts which were to him only fond wishes and aspirations, but which have since become realities. Greece has been liberated from Turkish rule and entered, as an independent kingdom, into the family of European states, though she has not attained the elevation of which Byron dreamt; and Italy too, which after the suppression of Carbonarism he thought had been thrown back for centuries into barbarism, has been regenerated, and her unity achieved. The Countess of Guiccioli, who then saw no resource left to her oppressed countrymen but to go back to the composition of operas, has lived to see the fulfilment of the youthful hopes for which she and her relatives sacrificed so much. It is not too much to say, that Byron essentially contributed to these two great ends, not, indeed, by the action of his immediate interference, but by his indirect influence on public opinion.

It might have been imagined at the first view, that the poetry of Byron must needs have found a more decided echo among the Romanic nations, with whom in more than one respect he had close affinities; but this was the case only with the French. To the nations of the south of Europe, who take life so easily, his world-sorrow was scarcely intelligible, nay, even repulsive; the Don Juan of the Romanic nations never reflects but enjoys all things with perfect *naïveté*. Yet the political side in Byron's poetry was not

without its effect in the revolutionary movements of Spain and Italy. The secret society of the *Numantinos* in Spain betrays the magnetic attraction of his influence, and Don José de Espronceda (1810–1842), perhaps the most important Spanish poet of recent times, who is called the Byron of Spain, shows, not only in his poetry but also in his life, a remarkable affinity with the poet, whose works he diligently and thoroughly studied. In Italy, the celebrated Giovanni Berchet (1790–1851) was conspicuous among the revolutionary Byronic school. We have already had occasion to remark, that at Venice Byron's works were much studied and often translated.

In France the influences of Byron were far more profound and widely ramified. Among all the poets of England no one was so congenial to the French as Byron. In the development of the so-called Romantic School his influence and that of Shakespeare were coincident; here they lent strength to each other, and were blended together in this movement. Victor Hugo, like Byron, full of genius and passion, but also like Byron unstable, vain, and greedy of fame, took up and continued in his spirit both the political and literary conflict; he declared Romanticism to be synonymous with liberalism in poetry—he might have said, with more truth, with radicalism in poetry; he even accepted the name of the Satanic School as an epithet of honour. Lamartine was the representative of the sentimental side of world-sorrow called forth by 'Childe Harold,' Musset, of its cynical side generated by 'Don Juan,' while Delavigne, in his 'Messeniennes,' became the inspired singer of freedom. The mere names of these poets show how the impulses received through Byron spread themselves in ever-widening circles, and how a widely-diffused and permanent colouring was thereby

given to French literature and poetry.[1] It is while speaking of Alfred de Musset, that Heine deplores that 'this author, by the study in his youth of a French translation of Byron's works, was seduced into affecting, in the costume of that splenetic lord, the satiety and weariness of life which at that period was the fashion among the youths of Paris. The rosiest boys, the healthiest young rogues, used then to profess that their capacity for enjoyment was exhausted; they feigned that their hearts had acquired the chill of old age, and they assumed a distraught and listless look.'[2]

In Germany, Byron, like almost all English poets, found a second fatherland. His influence on our literature was confined indeed to one period only, nor has his poetry been interwoven, like Shakespeare's, for ever with our own; but if limited in duration, it was widely propagated and intense during its reign. Goethe frequently alluded to this: 'Lord Byron's poems,' he writes in 1817, 'the more the peculiarities of this extraordinary genius were discovered, enlisted an ever-growing sympathy, so that men and women, youths and maidens, appeared almost to forget their German feeling and nationality. With the increased facility of getting and possessing his works, it

[1] Lamartine translated the last canto of 'Childe Harold,' and wrote also a biography of Byron. Musset was the imitator of 'Lara,' 'The Corsair,' 'Parisina,' and 'Don Juan.' Delavigne wrote a play called 'Marino Faliero.' The Philhellenic cause was promoted in France by Fauriel's *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (1824–25). Of the numerous French translations of Byron, may be mentioned: *Œuvres complètes de Lord Byron.* Trad. sur la dernière édition anglaise par B. Laroche. Paris, 1841, 5th ed. *Œuvres complètes de Lord Byron.* Traduction nouvelle de L. Barre, illustrée par Mettais, Boncourt, Doré. Paris, 1853. *Childe Harold.* Trad. en vers français par Luc. Davésiès de Pontès. Paris, 1862.

[2] *Shakespeare's Mädchen und Frauen.* Heine's *Werke.* Dritter Band, p. 380. Hamburg, 1867.

grew a habit with me to interest myself in him. He was a contemporary who became dear to me, and I delighted to follow him in thought through all the aberrations of his life.' Goethe in his sympathy and admiration for Byron, was the representative of his countrymen. He summed up, in one of his conversations with Chancellor Müller, his recognition of Byron's genius in these words: 'Byron alone I place by my side! Walter Scott is nothing compared with him.'[1] By the character of Euphorion in the second part of 'Faust,' Goethe, it is thought, meant to represent Byron, at any rate he intended for him the funeral dirge.

EUPHORION (*from the Depths*).

Leave me here, in the gloomy void,
Mother, not thus alone! [*Pause.*

CHORUS (*Dirge*).

Not alone! where'er thou bidest;
For we know thee what thou art.
Ah! if from the day thou hidest,
Still to thee will cling each heart.
Scarce we venture to lament thee,
Singing, envious of thy fate;
For in storm and sun were lent thee
Song and courage, fair and great.

Ah! for earthly fortune fashioned,
Strength was thine and proud descent;
Early erring, o'er-impassioned,
Youth, alas! from thee was rent.
For the world thine eye was rarest;
All the heart to thee was known;
Thine were loves of women fairest,
And a song thy very own.

Yet thou rannest uncontrolledly
In the net the fancies draw,
Thus thyself divorcing boldly
As from custom so from law;

[1] Müller's *Unterhaltungen*, p. 65.

Till the highest thought expended
Set at last thy courage free;
Thou wouldst win achievement splendid,
But it was not given to thee.

Unto whom, then? Question dreary,
Destiny will never heed;
When in evil days and weary,
Silently the people bleed.
But new songs shall still elate them;
Bow no longer and deplore!
For the soil shall generate them
As it hath done heretofore.[1]

Byronism attained its culminating point with us in Young Germany, whose relations to Byron were similar to those of the 'Sturm und Drang' writers to Shakespeare. This was the period when radicalism, free-thinking, and world-sorrow flourished in our literature. Like Byron, the poets of Young Germany considered strongly marked lives, ardent passions, the soarings of genius above the common social order as the indispensable requisites for the poet, who was right in their eyes only when in open antagonism with the world. Byron's life they regarded inseparable from Byron's poetry, and looked on it therefore as much as possible as a pattern. In these respects Heinrich Heine may with some truth be called the Byron of Germany. His political and religious instability, his philosophy thence resulting, always inharmonious and tending to extremes, his cynical tones, his emancipation of the flesh, his mockery of religion far transcending the measure Byron allowed to himself, his want of veracity, his vanity, his inordinate love of fame—all these are thoroughly Byronic. In him world-sorrow appears in its coarsest

[1] [From Bayard Taylor's translation of *Faust*, ii. 275-6. On this dirge the translator has this annotation: 'Here all allegory is thrown aside; the four stanzas are a lament, not for Euphorion, but for Byron. They express Goethe's feeling for the poet, while the profound impression created throughout Europe by the news of his death was still fresh' (ii. 483).]

form, and betrays the pinched and wasted Hippocratic face which betokens death, and has been, with him it is to be hoped, buried for ever. Let it not, however, be forgotten, that the poetry of Shelley at that period interested and inflamed the youth of Germany in a hardly less degree than Byron's.

The powerful effect of the writings of Byron on the Slavonic East, is a phenomenon pregnant with results. Hitherto it had been the literature of France only which enlisted the sympathies of these nations; no other English poet before Byron had been studied or understood. Gervinus has explained very clearly how Poland and Russia presented a fruitful soil, in which the seed scattered by Byron necessarily yielded an abundant crop. The state of contradiction between Asiatic barbarism and the desire for the civilisation of Western Europe; the despotic repression of all political aspirations, which drove the youth of these countries into secret leagues, like that of the Carbonari in Italy; the circumstance, that the aristocracy, who from its social position, felt the attraction of Byron, was the focus not only of intelligence, but of all the movements for liberty—all this excited the deepest interest in the poet, whose works they had in the first instance learnt to know from French translations. His excellences of style, his mastery over the powers of his own language, weighed mightily with a people which was striving to render its own language capable of poetical composition. The glow of Byron's passion was also sympathetically answered in the Slaves, who are themselves so given to feeling and passion. It was his Tales, especially, which found imitators, who ventured at first to give vent in them to political thought only in feeble hints and indications. First in Puschkin's 'Ode to Liberty' did political thought strike in a fuller tone; and henceforward the name of this Russian Byron has become

the watchword of the ardent youth of Russia. The most celebrated of his works, the metrical romance of 'Onegin,' is constructed after the type of 'Don Juan.' 'Don Juan' has recently been translated into Russian by Markewicz, while Nekrassow and Nicolaus Gerbel have published a translation of his entire works.

Having thus surveyed the literary and political influences which sprang from Byron, from the southern extremity of Europe to its boundary on the north-east, we return to the country of the poet, where his influence hitherto has been the least, and where moral and religious bigotry even to the present moment have stood in the way of an impartial estimate of his merits. The publication, the investigation, the refutation of the calumnious charge which so long was cherished silently against him, may, perhaps, form a turning point. Further can bigoted blindness not go; it has become its own instrument of punishment, effecting the very opposite of that which it intended. The whole truth concerning the circumstances of the marriage and separation will doubtless one day see the light; and according to our firm conviction its publication will tend greatly to a more favourable view of Byron's character. Doubtless he had his share of faults and defects; but it is high time that he should be cleansed from the foul stains which malevolence, fanaticism, and misapprehension have falsely attributed to him. All in all he was, we repeat, as far as his life and character were concerned, the victim of circumstances. Perhaps now the day begins to dawn, when Goethe's enthusiastic —and for the present moment so significant—saying may partly at least find its fulfilment: 'Now,' says Goethe, 'the conviction uplifts us, that his nation will suddenly awake from the frenzied fits of censure and invective, which burst forth on him, to sobriety of judgment, and

will understand, that all the husks and dross of the individual and his time, through which and out of which the best has to work his way, were only momentary, fleeting, and perishable, whereas the astonishing fame, to which he has now and for ever raised his country, remains boundless in its glory and incalculable in its effects. Assuredly this nation, which has to boast of so many great names, will place him in triumph beside those in whom she may evermore take pride.'[1]

Si minus errasset, fecerat ille minus.

[1] Goethe's *Werke*, xxvi. 436–7. Stuttgart, 1857.

APPENDIX.

NOTE (A).

SOME REMARKS ON THE BYRON LINEAGE.

Dr. Elze very justly remarks, that pride of birth was a prominent trait in the character of Lord Byron: from this no one will dissent. Our author, however, depending mainly on the authority of Mr. Galt, who, in his Life of the poet, first impugned the purity of the Byron lineage, ventures on an unjust inference, charging Byron, in fact, with the conscious suppression of the knowledge of a blot in his escutcheon, even while he unhesitatingly and proudly proclaimed his unbroken Norman descent. Of the existence of such a blot no reasonable doubt, as we shall see, can be entertained; but it is very far from being certain, that Byron himself was cognisant of it.

Until the publication, in 1857, of the second edition of Sir Harris Nicolas' 'Historic Peerage of England,' the antiquity and purity of the Byron family had been asserted, in the most unqualified manner, by the chief genealogical authorities. Thus, for instance, Collins, in the fourth edition of his Peerage, vol. viii. p. 22 (1768), states most explicitly, that Ralph de Buron was 'the direct ancestor of the present Lord Byron,' i.e. of William the fifth lord, who enjoyed such an unenviable celebrity. Precisely the same words are repeated in Sir Egerton Brydges' edition (1812) of this book, vol. vii. p. 90; 'the present lord' of that edition being the poet, 'who by a volume of juvenile poems has shown a mind, not only highly cultivated but adorned with fancy and feeling.' In both editions, then, of this authoritative book, the uninterrupted descent of the Byrons from their Norman ancestor Ralph de Buron is positively asserted, and traced

with every apparent justification. It was not till the publication of Galt's 'Life of Byron' (1830), that anything affecting this proud claim was advanced. In his preface to this feeble and spiteful 'Life,' Mr. Galt offers his best acknowledgments to the learned and ingenious Mr. Nicolas for the curious genealogical fact of a 'baton sinistre' being in the escutcheon of the Byrons of Newstead; at the same time, while thanking his authority, he acquits the poet of being aware of it. The nature and extent of the stain was not specified by Mr. Galt; nor had it been publicly stated by Mr. Nicolas himself (better known as Sir Harris Nicolas) at that date. The first precise statement of it seems to have been made in the second edition (1857) of Sir Harris' book, published after his death under the editorship of Mr. Courthope, in which, p. 87, after a short notice of the original founders of the family, Barons by Tenure, the first baron is introduced thus:—

BARONS

1. 1643. 1. Sir John Byron, K. B., descended from an illegitimate son of Sir John Byron, the male descendant of the above family, created Baron Byron of Rochdale, co. Pal. Lanc., &c.

In the first edition, however, of this work which appeared 1825—the year after Byron's death—under the title of a 'Synopsis of the Peerage of England,' the creation stands thus:—

BARONS

1. 1643. 1. Sir John Byron, K. B., descended from the above family, created Baron Byron of Rochdale, co. Pal. Lanc., &c.

Sir Harris therefore, writing in 1825 of the Peerage of England, either had no knowledge, or, which is most improbable, suppressed his knowledge, of the taint of illegitimacy in a member of the family antecedent to the creation of the Barony. His discovery of it, therefore, was subsequent to the publication of his Synopsis. In whom did the descent become tainted? To the kindness of Sir Albert Woods, Garter, we are indebted for the following extract from the Byron Pedigree, as entered in the Herald's Visitation of the County of Lancaster, made in 1567, which determines the question:—

'Sr. Nicholas Byron of Clayton in Com Lanc Knight maried Alyce daughter to Sr. John Butler of Bewsye in Com Lanc Knight and by her hathe yssue Sr. John Byron, Knight, his eldest Sonne died sans yssue, Sr. Nycholas Byron Knight, second Sonne.

Sr. Nycholas Byron of Clayton aforesayd Knight, second Sonne and heire to Sr. Nycholas and Brother and heire to Sr. John Byron, maried . . . . daughter of Sr. John Busshe of Hougham in Com Lincolne, Knight and by her had yssue Sr. John Byron, Knight his eldest Sonne and fowre doughters wherof thre died sans yssue, Marie fowrthe doughter, maried to . . . . Wymbyshe of Norton in Com Lanc ar

'Sr. John Byron of Clayton aforesayd Knight, Sonne and heire to Sr. Nycholas, maried to his firste Wiefe Isabell daughter to Peter Shelton of Lynne in Norfolke and by her had no yssue. After the said Sr. John maried to his second Wiefe Elizabethe daur to Wm. Costerden of Blakesley in Com Lanc and Wydowe to George Halghe of Halghe Com Lanc Gent and by her hathe yssue John Byron his eldest Sonne and heire *filius naturalis*.

'John Byron of Clayton in Com Lanc ar, *sonne and heire by deade of gifte to Sr. John Byron, Knight* maried Alyce daughter to Sr. Nycholas Strelleye of Strelley in Com Nottingham Knight and by her hathe yssue Nycholas Byron his eldeste Sonne and heire apparent. Anthony second Sonne, and John third Sonne, Isabell Elizabethe and Marye.'

So then, Sir John Byron, K. B., called 'little Sir John with the great beard,' to whom the priory of Newstead, as well as other possessions, was granted May 26, 1540, by Henry VIII., married, as his second wife, the relict of George Halgh of Halgh in co. Pal. Lanc. 'on whom,' as old Thoroton in his 'History of Nottinghamshire' quaintly says, 'he begot (soon enough) Sir John Byron,' who was the *filius naturalis*, inheriting by deed of gift, and grandfather of the first Lord Byron (1643).

The candid Galt, who is so profuse in his acknowledgments to his friend Mr. Nicholas for this interesting discovery, is not altogether correct when he speaks of the 'baton sinistre' in the arms of the Byrons of Newstead. No such sign of illegitimacy ever existed in the escutcheon of the Byrons. In the visitation above alluded to, the arms of the family are placed, according to

Sir Albert Woods, within 'a bordure;' but the same unimpeachable authority informs us, that in a collection of Arms of the Nobility by Sir Edward Walker, Garter, in the reign of Charles II., 'the bordure' is omitted.

Our interest in this question is simply to show, that Byron was not wiser than the genealogical authorities of England of his own time; that he believed what they recorded; and that no one is warranted in asserting, that he was conscious of any flaw, when he vaunted his Norman descent.

NOTE (B).

PLACE AND DATE OF BYRON'S BIRTH.

Lord Byron is said to have been born (1) at his mother's estate within thirty miles of Aberdeen, (2) at Dover, and (3) in London.

1. The first statement seems to rest solely on the authority of Sir Cosmo Gordon, who in his 'Life and Genius of Lord Byron,' London, 1824, p. 22, says, that 'George Gordon was born on his mother's estate in Aberdeenshire on the 22nd day of January, 1788.' He is followed in this by Mr. George Clinton in his 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Lord Byron,' London, 1825, p. 36. Regarding these gentlemen, nothing seems to be known; nor do their respective 'Lives' merit anything but oblivion. To the former book 'some private notices of Lord Byron by a schoolfellow' are appended, who is not slow to accept the authority of Sir Cosmo; for, says he, 'it is a proud distinction to Scotland to have produced the three greatest poets of the age, Byron, Campbell, and Scott' (p. 62). The clannishness of a Gordon, and the nationality of this school companion, sufficiently explain, therefore, this first erroneous account.

2. Mr. Dallas seems to be the origin of the second statement, that Lord Byron was born at Dover. He had no doubt excellent means of information; for he was brother-in-law of Captain George Anson Byron, the uncle of the poet; and in consequence of this connection he was well acquainted—he says—with Lord Byron's father and mother. In the note prefixed to his 'Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron,' London, 1824,

he thus represents the circumstances of Byron's birth: 'I find in the newspapers that Lord Byron is stated on the Urn to have been born in London. The year previous to the January when he was born, I was on a visit to Captain Byron and my sister at Chantilly. Lord Byron's father and mother, with Mrs. Leigh, then Augusta Byron, a child then about four years old, were in France. I returned to Boulogne, where I then had a house, when I was visited by Mrs. Byron on her way to England; she was pregnant, and stopped at Dover on crossing the Channel. That Lord Byron was born there I recollect being mentioned both by his uncle and my sister; and I am so fully persuaded of it (Captain Byron and my sister soon followed and staid some time at Folkestone), that I cannot even now give full credit to the contrary, and half suspect that his mother might have had him christened in London and thus given grounds for a mistake.' The same account is given—we cannot say corroborated—by the Countess Guiccioli, who, speaking of Byron's mother, says, that 'when obliged to return to England to be confined, she was so far advanced in pregnancy that she could not reach London, but gave birth to Lord Byron at Dover.'[1] The statement, which has also been adopted by the 'Nouvelle Biographie Universelle,' Paris, 1853, art. *Byron*, p. 938, is not in itself, in the least degree improbable; and, considering the circumstantiality of the account and the relationship of its author, ought, perhaps, to be regarded as decisive. But the 'Recollections,' alas! of the excellent Dallas betray symptoms, in several places, of a state of mind bordering—we say it with all tenderness—on positive imbecility, and justifying hesitation in accepting the above as the truth of fact. Thus, at the end of the volume, which must have been written about the same time as the above note, we find these strange incoherences: 'In the dedications of his (Byron's) poems there is no sincerity; he had neither respect nor regard for the persons to whom they were addressed; and Lord Holland, Rogers, Davies, and Hobhouse, if earthly knowledge becomes intuitive on retrospection, will see on what grounds I say this, and nod the recognition, and I trust the forgiveness, of heavenly spirits, if heavenly theirs become, to the wondering poet, with whose works their names

[1] Vol. i. chap. iii. p. 84. English translation.

are swimming down the stream of time. He and they shall have my nod, too, on the occasion, if, let me humbly add, my prayers shall have availed me beyond the grave.' Precision and accuracy are scarcely to be expected from a mind in this condition.

3. The most generally received account is, that Byron was born in London, January 22, 1788 (in furnished lodgings, 24 Holles Street,[1] Cavendish Square). So the tablet, placed on that house by the generous care of the Society of Arts; so the inscription on the mural tablet in the Chancel of Hucknall Torkard Church, placed there by his sister Mrs. Leigh, who had of course the information which was accepted by the family.

But beyond all doubt, Byron was baptised in the parish of Marylebone. Here is the certified extract made February 6, 1871 from the Register of Baptisms in the parish of Marylebone:—

BAPTISMS IN THE YEAR 1788.

March 1st { George Gordon, son of John Byron Esq. and Catherine } B. 22 inst.

A moment's glance at this entry discovers a glaring clerical blunder. The poet, according to this, was baptised on March 1 and born on the 22nd of the same month! The 22 inst. is no doubt meant for 22 ult. But even with this emendation, the register contradicts the universal statement, that he was born January 22. There is, however, most probably, a second, though not quite so apparent, clerical error. The year 1788 was leap year, when February claims twenty-nine days. It is probable, therefore, that the person who made the above entry, forgetting the fact committed the mistake of writing March 1, instead of February 29. This second emendation being admitted, the entry would stand thus:

February 29 { George Gordon, son of John Byron Esq. and Catherine. } B. 22 ult.

It may then be asserted, that the poet was born January 22, 1788, and baptised February 29, in the parish of Marylebone.

[1] Since the above was written we have been referred to Murray's *Handbook of London*, in which it is alleged, on the authority of a bill in Mr. Murray's possession, that the house in which Byron was born was 16, not 24—unless, indeed, the numbers of the houses in that street have been altered since 1788.

NOTE (C).

M. J. J. COULMANN IN HIS RELATIONS WITH LORD BYRON.

> Stern death forbade my orphan youth to share
> The tender guidance of a father's care.

To these lines of the poem called 'Childish Recollections' included in the 'Hours of Idleness,' the editor of the complete edition of Byron's poetical works, 12mo. 1832, added a note, in which he ventured on the defence of the father, the want of whose care was thus lamented. He then strengthens his own observations by a long extract from a letter of Byron's to a gentleman whose name is not there given, in which the poet, with much warmth of feeling, vindicates the memory of his father and also of his grand-uncle, which had, as he conceived, been unjustly assailed. The editor, however, omitted to mention the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed, and to state with sufficient distinctness either the occasion on which it was written, or even the place where the original, from which the extract was taken, might be found. These points were cleared up for the first time, as far as we are aware, in that most useful publication 'Notes and Queries,' 4th series, June 5, 1869, p. 524 et seqq. Attention was there directed to an article in the April number of a forgotten and worthless magazine called 'Paul Pry,' of the year 1826, p. 105-7, which contained not only the letter *in extenso*, from which Lockhart had taken the extract alluded to, but another shorter letter or note of Byron's addressed to the same person, both translated by the author of that article from the French copies of them in the '*Mercure du Dix-neuvième Siècle, tome douzième, année* 1826.' By referring to this journal we are enabled to show how these letters came to be written, and to give some particulars, which are not without interest, regarding the person to whom they were addressed.

In the year 1823 a young Frenchman, M. J. J. Coulmann, filled with an enthusiastic admiration of Lord Byron, sought and obtained an interview with the poet at Genoa, in the month of January of that year, which was followed by some

correspondence. He related his experience to the world in the journal called the '*Mercure du Dix-neuvième Siècle*,' in what he entitles '*Fragment d'un Voyage en Italie. Une Visite à Byron à Gênes.*' Regarding the author we can only discover, that at the time of his visit to Byron he was a very young man, who appears to have been the author of some literary productions, which after his visit he sent to the poet. Penetrated, as he tells us in this '*Fragment*,' with an ardent desire to see the first poet of England and of the age, he undertook for this purpose a journey to Italy at the beginning of 1823. At Turin he learnt that Byron, who he imagined was living at Venice, had retired to Genoa. Thither he repaired with a curiosity still further heightened to see 'the extraordinary man' who sought retirement amid the solitudes of that splendid city. 'I wrote,' he then continues, '*simplement*' 'to Lord Byron, that a young Frenchman, who had no other pretension to be admitted to his presence than admiration for his genius, would esteem it a great happiness if his Lordship would deign to receive him.' Full of hopes and fears he waited for the return of his messenger; dreaming, as he says, of '*quelque moyen nouveau, piquant, dramatique, analogue à sa capricieuse sauvagerie*'—to attain his end; when his trepidations were pleasingly dispelled by the arrival of a letter '*avec un grand cachet revêtu de ses armes et cette devise: Crede Biron*,'—written in Italian, which however M. Coulmann does not give in that language, but a translation of it in French, which again we render into English:—

'Sir,—I shall be very happy to make your acquaintance, but I am very sorry to tell you, that being unaccustomed either to speak or to write French, I shall be unable to derive all the benefit I could wish from your conversation. If, however, what I have said does not deter you, I shall be delighted to see you to-morrow at 2 o'clock.

'With profound respect, I have the honour to be your most obedient, humble servant,

'Noel Byron, Peer of England.'

Full of varied emotions, M. Coulmann drove next morning—January 7—to the Casa Saluzzo, situated in the charming suburb of Albaro, commanding beautiful views of Genoa, the sea, and the Apennines. Its courtyard was surrounded by

cypress-trees, cut like yews into artificial forms, which indicated that the villa was not altogether deserted, though the grass and weeds which grew luxuriantly in the grounds and its dilapidated condition impressed him with a feeling of desolation. Conducted by 'a young Albanian in an Oriental costume, with a handsome countenance and a fine beard'—probably Tita, Byron's Venetian Gondolier—he was introduced into the presence of the poet, who, advancing to meet him with an expression of great kindliness and with manners of winning grace and refined simplicity, quickly dispelled the preconceptions he had formed. Prepared to behold in the author of 'Childe Harold' and the 'Corsair' a figure of heroic proportions, the young Frenchman was at first surprised at what seemed to him his diminutive stature, and the extreme plainness of the dress of a poet 'whose publishers paid him a guinea a line.' Notwithstanding this check to his imagination, he quickly discerned the rare beauty of that face and head, which has become so familiar to the world. The conversation, carried on chiefly in Italian, which Coulmann says Byron spoke with the fluency and accent of an Italian, turned on a great variety of subjects. The merits of Scott and Moore, and the celebrated men of letters in France of that day, were discussed, but nothing as recorded in these reminiscences seems worthy of reproduction. Subsequent to this visit M. Coulmann appears to have sent to Byron the works of some eminent Frenchmen, together with the expression of their homage and regard, and an Essay on Byron's own genius, probably that by M. Amédée Pichot, in which occurred the expressions to which Lord Byron took exception in the letter with which M. Coulmann concludes his '*Fragment*.' Like the former note, the letter was most probably written in Italian, though it is given in French; from which the author of the article in the 'Paul Pry' Magazine published the translation, which with a few alterations we subjoin.

'Genoa, July 12, [?] 1823.

'My dear Sir,—Your letter, and what accompanied it, have given me the greatest pleasure. The fame and works of the writers who have deigned to give me these volumes, bearing their names, were not unknown to me, but to receive them from the authors themselves is more flattering to my feelings. I beg you to present my thanks to each of them in particular; and to add,

how proud I am of their good opinion, and how charmed I shall be to cultivate their acquaintance, if ever the occasion should occur. The productions of M. Jouy have long been familiar to me. Who has not read and applauded "The Hermit" and "Sylla"? But I cannot accept what it has pleased your friends to call their *homage*, because there is no sovereign in the republic of letters; and even if there were, I have never had the pretension or the power to become a usurper. I have to return you thanks for honouring me with your own compositions; I thought you too young, and probably too amiable, to be an author. As to the Essay, &c., I am obliged to you for the present, though I had already seen it, prefixed to the last edition of the translation [1] I have nothing to object to it, with regard to what concerns myself personally, though naturally there are some of the facts in it discoloured, and several errors into which the author has been led by the accounts of others. I allude to facts, and not criticisms. But the same author has cruelly calumniated my father and my grand-uncle, but more especially the former. So far from being "brutal," he was, according to the testimony of all those who knew him, of an extremely amiable and (*enjoué*) joyous character, but careless (*insouciant*) and dissipated. He had, consequently, the reputation of a good officer, and showed himself such in the Guards, in America. The facts themselves refute the assertion. It is not by "brutality" that a young officer in the Guards seduces and carries off a Marchioness, and marries two heiresses. It is true that he was a very handsome man, which goes a great way. His first wife (Lady Conyers and Marchioness of Carmarthen) did not die of grief, but of a malady which she caught by having imprudently insisted upon accompanying my father to a hunt, before she was completely recovered from the accouchement which gave birth to my sister Augusta. His second wife, my respected mother, had, I assure you, too proud a spirit to bear the ill usage of any man, no matter who he might be; and this she would have soon proved. I should add, that he lived a long time in Paris, and was in habits of intimacy with the old Marshal Biron, Commandant of the French Guards; who, from the similitude of names, and Norman origin of our family, supposed that there was some distant relationship between us. He died some years before the age of forty, and whatever may have been his faults, they were

[1] That is, of his own works.

certainly not those of harshness and grossness (*dureté et grossièreté*). If the notice should reach England, I am certain that the passage relative to my father will give much more pain to my sister (the wife of Colonel Leigh, attached to the Court of the late Queen, *not* Caroline, but Charlotte, wife of George III.), even than to me; and this she does not deserve, for there is not a more angelic being upon earth. Augusta and I have always loved the memory of our father as much as we loved each other, and this at least forms a presumption that the stain of harshness was not applicable to it. If he dissipated his fortune, that concerns us alone, for we are his heirs; and till we reproach him with it, I know no one else who has a right to do so. As to Lord Byron, who killed Mr. Chaworth in a duel, so far from retiring from the world, he made the tour of Europe, and was appointed Master of the Staghounds after that event, and did not give up society until his son had offended him by marrying in a manner contrary to his duty. So far from feeling any remorse for having killed Mr. Chaworth, who was a fire-eater (*spadassin*), and celebrated for his quarrelsome disposition, he always kept the sword which he used upon that occasion in his bed-chamber, where it still was *when he died*. It is singular enough, that when very young, I formed a strong attachment for the grand-niece and heiress of Mr. Chaworth, who stood in the same degree of relationship as myself to Lord Byron; and at one time it was thought that the two families would have been united in us. She was two years older than I was, and we were very much together in our youth. She married a man of an old and honourable family; but her marriage was not a happier one than my own. Her conduct, however, was irreproachable, but there was no sympathy between their characters, and a separation took place. I had not seen her for many years. When an occasion offered, I was upon the point, with her consent, of paying her a visit, when my sister, who has always had more influence over me than anyone else, persuaded me not to do it. "For," said she, "if you go, you will fall in love again, and then there will be a scene; one step will lead to another, *et cela fera un éclat*," &c. I was guided by these reasons, and shortly after I married; with what result it is useless to say. Mrs. C., some time after, being separated from her husband, became insane; but she has since recovered her reason, and is, I believe, reconciled to her husband. This is a long letter, and

principally about my family, but it is the fault of M. Pichot, my benevolent biographer. He may say of me what he likes, whether good or evil, but I desire that he should speak of my relations only as they deserve. If you could find an occasion of making him, as well as M. Nodier, rectify the facts relative to my father, and publish them, you would do me a great service, for I cannot bear to have him unjustly spoken of. I must conclude abruptly, for I have occupied you too long. Believe me to be very much honoured by your esteem, and always your obliged and obedient servant,

'Noel Byron.

'P.S.—The tenth or twelfth of this month I shall embark for Greece. Should I return, I shall pass through Paris, and shall be much flattered in meeting you and your friends. Should I not return, give me as affectionate a place in your memory as possible.'

NOTE (D).

ON THE EARLY POEMS OF BYRON.

By the early poems are here meant the four small volumes which Byron printed between the autumn of 1806 and the spring of 1808; two of these being intended for private circulation, the third and fourth being the first and second editions of the 'Hours of Idleness,' published by S. and J. Ridge of Newark in 1807 and 1808 respectively. Various changes were introduced into each of these volumes; there are some poems common to all of them; one or two which appeared in the first were withdrawn in the second impression; many contained in this are not given in the first edition of the 'Hours of Idleness,' and some which were published therein were suppressed in the second edition, to which again were added several pieces, the most interesting and full of promise of any of the poems of this youthful period. An account, then, of these several collections and of the various changes they underwent while passing through his hands will not be without interest.

'My first dash into poetry was made,' Byron himself tells us,[1]

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 52.

'as early as 1800. It was the ebullition of a passion for my first cousin Margaret Parker. I was then about twelve.' The verses, then, on the death of this young object of his affections were the earliest of his poems. From his habit of dating his compositions at this period of his life, we discover by the inspection of the dates that he had written several poems between this his first essay and the year 1806, when the passion to print became strong in his mind. 'I presume,' he writes in a letter to Miss Pigot,[1] August 10, 1806, 'the printer has brought you the offspring of my poetic mania. Remember in the first line to read "loud the winds whistle," instead of "round," which that blockhead Ridge has inserted by mistake, and makes nonsense of the whole stanza.' The first line he here speaks of is the first of the verses 'On leaving Newstead,' which in the earliest of all the volumes runs thus:—

Through the cracks in these battlements loud the winds whistle.

What Miss Pigot, then, received was probably a printed copy of this poem merely. The same day he writes[2] also to Mr. Pigot: 'This astonishing packet will doubtless amaze you; but having an idle hour this evening, I wrote the enclosed stanzas, which I request you to deliver to Ridge to be printed separate from my other compositions, as you will perceive them to be improper for the perusal of ladies: of course none of the females of your family must see them.' These stanzas were no doubt the poem addressed to Mary, of which we shall learn more in the sequel. A few days afterwards—August 16, 1806—he again writes to Mr. Pigot:[3] 'By the enclosure of a second *gingle of rhyme*, you will probably conceive my muse to be really prolific; her inserted production was brought forth a few years ago, and found by accident on Thursday among some old papers. I have recopied it, and adding the proper date request it may be printed with the rest of the family;' and in the same letter: 'Will you desire Ridge to suspend the printing of my poems till he hears further from me, as I have determined to give them a new form entirely? This prohibition does not extend to the two last pieces I have sent with my letters to you.' After a quarrel of a more lasting and formidable character than usual with his mother,

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 106. [2] *Ibid.* p. 107. [3] *Ibid.* p. 108.

which drove him from Southwell first to London and then to Worthing, to escape from her, he wrote to Mr. Pigot[1] from the latter place: 'My poetics you will pack up for the same place, and not even reserve a copy for yourself or sister, as I am about to give them an *entire new form*. When they are complete you shall have the first fruits. Mrs. B. is on no account to see or touch them.' Eight days afterwards he returns to the same subject, and with some urgency says to the same correspondent:[2] 'I wish you to send my poems to my lodgings in London immediately, as I have several alterations and some additions to make; *every copy* must be sent, as I am about to *amend* them, and you shall soon behold them in all their glory.' His ardent friend and admirer Miss Pigot received a note from him about the same time, to tell her what he feels will please her:[3] 'You regretted in a former letter that my poems were not more extensive: I now for your satisfaction announce that I have nearly doubled them, partly by the discovery of some I conceived to be lost and partly by some new productions.' No young budding author ever watched over the printing of his effusions with more anxious care than Byron, according to these extracts, did, while he altered, amended, and arranged again and again the small collection of his poems, which in the month of November 1806 was ready at last for distribution among his friends and neighbours. It formed a small 4to. consisting of 66 pages, printed by S. and J. Ridge of Newark, with the simple title 'Fugitive Pieces,' and a dedication

TO
THOSE FRIENDS
AT
WHOSE REQUEST THEY WERE PRINTED,
FOR WHOSE
AMUSEMENT AND APPROBATION
THEY ARE
SOLELY INTENDED,
THESE TRIFLES ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

There is also a short preface or notice: 'As these poems are never intended to meet the public eye, no apology is necessary for the form in which they now appear. They are printed

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 109. [2] *Ibid.* p. 110. [3] *Ibid.* p. 113.

merely for the perusal of a few friends to whom they are dedicated; and as most of them were composed between the age of fifteen and seventeen, their defects will be pardoned or forgotten in the youth and inexperience of the author.' There is no table of contents, nor are the various pieces even numbered: the dates appended to the poems—and all, we think, are dated—range from 1802 to October 9, 1806.

The first copy of the limited impression was sent to the Rev. John Thomas Becher, Prebendary of Southwell Minster, between whom and Byron, notwithstanding the difference of nearly twenty years in their age, there subsisted the warmest friendship, and from whom the younger man always received most prudent counsel offered in the most genial manner. Among these fugitive pieces there were two, the taste and tendency of which were most displeasing to Mr. Becher—both addressed apparently to the same person, though doubts may very legitimately be entertained, whether the Mary of these poems were flesh and blood or a mere creature of the boy-poet's fancy; the one entitled 'To Mary on receiving her picture,' and the other and longer simply 'To Mary.' The former, consisting of seven verses, is included in each of the four early volumes; the fourth verse, however, which in the earliest copy stood thus—

> Here, I behold its beauteous hue,
> But where's the beam of soft desire?
> Which gave a lustre to its blue,
> Love, only love, could e'er inspire—

was altered, we cannot say improved, at Mr. Becher's suggestion, into,

> Here, I behold its beauteous hue,
> But where's the beam so sweetly straying?
> Which gave a lustre to its blue,
> Like Luna o'er the ocean straying.

It was the second poem, however, which so profoundly and so justly offended Mr. Becher, who, immediately on receiving the volume, wrote and sent to Byron an expostulation in verse, the tenor of which, as the original does not exist, can be inferred only from the answer it drew forth from Byron.[1] But Mr. Becher's friendly remonstrance had more positive results; it led to a fine

[1] *Hours of Idleness.* First edition, p. 118.

act of sacrifice on the poet's part. He determined to consume the whole impression, and forthwith every copy was burnt in Mr. Becher's presence. Two copies only were saved from the conflagration; of these one had been sent to Mr. Pigot, at that time residing in Edinburgh, and the second remained in Mr. Becher's possession. They still survive; the former copy, with 'J. M. Pigot' inscribed in Byron's hand, came into the possession of his sister Miss Pigot, who bequeathed it, with other relics of the poet, to Mrs. Webb, of Newstead Abbey, where it is preserved with watchful care. The second copy has ever since remained in the Becher family; and the present possessor, Mrs. Becher, widow of the son of Byron's wise monitor, keeps it among her choicest treasures. The Newstead copy is, we regret to say, imperfect, wanting pp. 17–20 inclusive, and eight pages at the end. The Southwell copy is perfect, and may truly be regarded as a unique volume. The two leaves (pp. 17–20) wanting in the former copy contain the offending poem 'To Mary,' consisting of sixteen stanzas—doubtless those alluded to in the letter to Mr. Pigot quoted above—'*to that naughty Mary*,' as Miss Pigot adds in a note attached to the Newstead copy, '*to whom those lines were written which excited such a commotion in the state and were the reason of this edition being put into the fire.*' There is nothing in them to compensate for their silly viciousness—not a single felicity of thought or expression; they are weaker than the feeblest of all the early poems; a poor imitation, in short, of the 'Poems by Thomas Little,' 'which,' as Byron himself wrote to Moore,[1] 'I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth summer. Heigho! I believe all the mischief I have ever done or sung has been owing to that confounded book of yours!' A perusal of them would convince any man of the least taste or judgment of the appropriateness of Mr. Becher's remonstrance; and, on the other hand, the destruction of the impression of a volume on which, as we have seen, the youthful poet had bestowed so much care, and of which he was not a little proud, must surely be regarded as a proof of a generous pliability of character in Byron.

But no sooner was the sacrifice made, than he began the preparation of another and a more worthy volume to replace

[1] Letter to Moore, *Life*, iv. 326.

that which he had called in and destroyed. In about six weeks it was printed and ready for distribution. It formed a 12mo. of 144 pages; and the more modest title of 'Fugitive Pieces' of the earlier volume is transformed into 'Poems on Various Occasions,' with a motto from Horace: 'Virginibus puerisque canto,' printed at Newark by the Ridges, and bearing the date 1807. The dedication of the first remains unaltered in the second impression; but the short notice slightly differs from the earlier, and is as follows: 'The only apology necessary to be adduced in extenuation of any errors in the following collection is, that the author has not yet completed his nineteenth year. December 23, 1806.'

A copy was forthwith sent to his friend Mr. Pigot at Edinburgh, and with it a letter, dated January 13, 1807: 'With this epistle you will receive a volume of all my "Juvenilia" published since your departure; it is of a considerably greater size than the copy in your possession, which I beg you will destroy, as the present is much more complete. That unlucky poem to my poor Mary has been the cause of some animadversion from *ladies in years*. I have not printed it in this collection, in consequence of my being pronounced a most *profligate sinner*, in short a *young Moore*. . . . . This volume is *vastly* correct and miraculously chaste.'[1] The volume thus described contained some alterations and improvements on the preceding, and several additions. The order of the pieces is changed; the allusions to the persons addressed are more disguised; and the new poems are of a more ambitious character. The Southwell and Newstead copies of these two impressions, with their manuscript insertions, enable us to lift, with no rude or unhallowed hand, the veil thrown over the 'fair deities,' who inspired these boyish effusions. The daughters of the cheerful and genial Southwell circle of those days are the fair objects addressed in these poems. Tradition, which still lingers there, speaks of 'one formed so heavenly fair,' whose beauty inspired the verses addressed to M.—

Oh, did these eyes instead of fire—

the heroine of the poem on the stray pistol shot that hissed too near 'her lovely head,' to whom also two of the occasional poems, published for the first time in Lockhart's edition of Byron's Poetical Works, were addressed, of whom the pilgrim to

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 123.

Hucknall-Torkard Church, the resting place of what was mortal of the poet—the most forlorn looking of Churches, dreary, dismal, dark, and damp—will find on one of the pillars of the nave another touching record of her whose eyes were once so bright—a tablet 'Sacred to the memory of Ann, the wife of the Rev. Luke Jackson, daughter of the Rev. Henry Houson of Southwell, who died December 25, 1821, aged 30 years.' The additions to the new volume are considerable, and among them are two pieces of greater length and more pretension than any in the preceding—'Childish Recollections,' a poem of two hundred and fifty-two lines; and the Elegy on Newstead, of thirty-nine stanzas. Through Mr. Pigot, then studying at Edinburgh, presentation copies were sent to Lord Woodhouselee and Mr. Henry Mackenzie, whose fame as the author of 'The Man of Feeling' was inferior to no writer of fiction of that period; and through the same hand the favourable opinions of these eminent men were transmitted to Byron. Miss Pigot, writing to her brother, says:[1] 'Lord Byron was so much pleased' with Mackenzie's commendations. He announces to his friend Mr. William Bankes,[2] that the same day he received his critical remarks on his poetical productions, he had been honoured with the encomiums of Mackenzie, the celebrated author of 'The Man of Feeling;' and again in another to the same friend[3] he writes: 'Since my last I have received two critical opinions from Edinburgh too flattering for me to detail. One is from Lord Woodhouselee, at the head of the Scotch literati—the other from Mackenzie, who sent his decision a second time more at length.' It is not a little singular that encomiums from the critics of the North should have stimulated Byron to his next venture—the publication of these poems, amended and enlarged, as 'The Hours of Idleness,' while the contemptuous sarcasm on that volume proceeding from the same region should have stung and braced him to the composition of the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.'

The vigour of his mind, now awakening slowly to the consciousness of its own powers, even if it had not received the encouragement, so flattering to a young author, of men of such eminence as Tytler and Mackenzie, would soon have led him to pass

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 157 (note). [2] *Ibid.* p. 126. [3] *Ibid.* p. 127.

beyond the limits of a private circle, and to seek the sympathy and praise of a wider world.

The volume we have been describing was printed for distribution early in 1807. Scarcely were the copies sent forth when he wrote to his friend Bankes:[1] 'Contrary to my former intention, I am now preparing a volume for the public at large; my amatory pieces will be exchanged, and others substituted in their place. The whole will be considerably enlarged, and will appear at the latter end of May 1807.' This was the 'Hours of Idleness: a Series of Poems, original and translated. By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor. Newark: S. & J. Ridge,[2] 1807.'

The young poet-philosopher, who had bade adieu to the world and all its attractions—who, in the earlier form of the 'Childish Recollections,' had sighed—

> Weary of love, of life, devoured with spleen,
> I rest, a perfect Timon, not nineteen:
> World! I renounce thee! All my hopes o'ercast,
> One sigh I give thee, but that sigh's the last—

how eagerly does he watch for the opinions of this very miserable world! 'Does my publication go off well?' he asks of Miss Pigot.[3] 'Has Ridge sold well? or do the ancients demur? What ladies have bought?' When success seems assured by the news of a considerable sale of the volume, with what complacency does he rebuke the fond impatience of Mr. Ridge! 'What the devil,' he asks of the same fair friend,[4] 'would Ridge have? is not fifty in a fortnight, before the advertisements, a sufficient sale? Are they liked or not in Southwell?' Again to the same person:[5] 'I heard from Ridge this morning: the seventy-five sent to town are circulated, and a demand for fifty more complied with, though the advertisements are not yet half published.' He announces to her that a presentation copy had been despatched to Lord Carlisle; but the growl of distant thunder mutters in the next words: 'I have not heard from him since. His opinions I neither know nor care about: if he is the least insolent, I shall

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 127.

[2] The grandson of Mr. J. Ridge, occupying the same premises in the Market-Place of Newark, preserves the printing press used for these early poems, which, with much civility, he shows to the curious.

[3] Moore's *Life*, i. 165. [4] *Ibid.* p. 166. [5] *Ibid.* p. 167.

enrol him with Butler[1] and other worthies. Perhaps the Earl "bears no brother near the throne:" if *so*, I will make his *sceptre* totter *in his hands*.'[2] The same correspondent soon again hears from him in a tone of high exultation:[3] 'Ridge does not proceed rapidly in Notts—very possible. In town things wear a more promising aspect; and a man whose works are praised by *reviewers*, admired by *duchesses*, and sold by every bookseller in the metropolis, does not dedicate much consideration to *rustic readers*.' He tells her a few days later, 'I have been praised to the skies in the "Critical Review," and abused greatly in another publication ("The Satirist"—a worthless paper). The first men of all ages have had their share, nor do the humblest escape; so I bear it like a philosopher.'[4]

'The Hours of Idleness' differs considerably from the second impression of the early poems. Instead of the short notice prefixed to these, we have a preface of nearly six pages, in which he does not fail to bring again to the front the extenuation of youth for the faults that readers may discover: 'These productions are the fruits of the lighter hours of a young man who has lately completed his nineteenth year.' Even on the title-page also his minority is proclaimed. Several poems of the second early volume are excluded from the 'Hours of Idleness'—especially those addressed to the fair deities we have heard of. The additions are considerable. In 'Oscar of Alva,' a poem consisting of seventy-nine stanzas, we have the first of his poetical tales. The 'Childish Recollections' of the second impression are expanded from 252 to 422 lines. An advance in poetical expression is very discernible in lines on Loch-na-Gar, and the stanzas addressed to M. (Mary Ann Chaworth) exceed in interest, if not in promise, any previous production. The translations also in the 'Hours of Idleness' were augmented by a paraphrase of the Episode of Nisus and Euryalus in the ninth book of the Æneid. One poem, however, underwent in the 'Hours of Idleness' a curious and significant alteration, to which attention should be directed. In both impressions of the privately printed volumes there is a poem entitled 'Epitaph on a beloved Friend,' Harrow, 1803, which appears also in the 'Hours of Idleness' as an 'Epitaph on a Friend,' p. 7, with the same date, but with the omission of

[1] Then Master of Harrow.
[2] Moore's *Life*, i. 168. [3] *Ibid.* p. 168. [4] *Ibid.* p. 176.

the place. In the former volumes, the friend on whom the epitaph is composed, is a boy 'cottage born:' in the latter, the friend is a youth in whose death the hopes of high lineage were threatened with extinction. The first ten lines of both epitaphs are precisely the same, except that the 'Oh friend' replaced the 'Oh boy' of the first line of the first copy, which after the tenth line proceeds as follows:—

Though low thy lot, since in a cottage born
No titles did thy humble name adorn,
To me far dearer was thy artless love
Than all the joys wealth, fame, and friends could prove;
For thee, alone, I lived or wished to live:
Oh God, if impious, this rash word forgive.
Heart broken now, I wait an equal doom,
Content to join thee in thy turf-clad tomb;
Where this frail form composed in endless rest,
I'll make my last, cold pillow on thy breast:
This life resigned without one parting sigh,
Together in one bed of earth we'll lie!
Together share the fate to mortals given,
Together mix our dust and hope for Heaven.

Personal feelings and allusions seem equally strong in each; yet no inference can be drawn as to the reality of the person whose death is lamented in either.

The sale of the volume was, as we have seen, considerable: and the reception it met with was evidently most gratifying to the young author. But while preparing a second edition for the press, a formidable report, like the bodeful note breaking in on the pastoral tranquillity of Rossini's overture to 'Tell,' reaches his ears. Writing to his friend Mr. Becher, who was carrying the new edition through the press, he says:[1] 'I am of so much importance, that a most violent attack is preparing for me in the next number of the "Edinburgh Review." This I had on the authority of a friend who has seen the proof and manuscript of the critique.' Though the second edition had been called for before that famous article appeared, when it actually was published in March 1808 it bore significant traces of the punishment he had there received. The title is altered into: 'Poems, original and translated, by George Gordon, Lord Byron.' The 'Minor' of the first disappears in the second edition. The long preface

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 204.

too, some of the expressions of which had pointed the sarcasm of that article, is omitted; and for the first time these early poems made their appearance without any intimation from the author of his juvenility. These are the only apparent effects of that attack in the second edition, which contains, however, some changes made quite irrespectively of the attack in the 'Edinburgh Review.' Again several poems are excluded, though there seems to be no special reason for their exclusion, as far as their excellence, compared with those retained, is concerned. The long poem termed 'Childish Recollections' is for instance left out. But there are additions of much interest. Two of the poems, more full of promise than any previously written, the song 'When I roved a young Highlander,' the stanzas 'I would I were a careless child,' first appear in the second edition. Among these also are what may be called the Epistles to the Duke of Dorset and the Earl of Clare—two of his Harrow friends—and the 'Lines written beneath an Elm in the Churchyard of Harrow on the Hill,' with which the volume concludes. When, on receiving a copy of the second edition from Ridge, he returns thanks to Mr. Becher for the trouble he had undertaken in the superintendence of it, he says to his adviser:[1] 'You have seen the "Edinburgh Review" of course.' Between March 1808, when this second edition saw the light, and March 1809, Byron was bending the whole force of his mind to the composition of the 'English Bards.' The nonage of Byron's intellectual life ended, then, with these early poems, and his next publication was to proclaim his manhood and usher in that prodigious fertility of genius which was to astonish the world.

NOTE (E).

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF LORD BYRON'S MEMOIRS OF HIMSELF.

THE following authoritative statement was made in a letter addressed to the 'Editor of the Academy,' by Mr. Murray, and published in the first number of that Journal (p. 8).

[1] Moore's *Life*, i. 209.

To the Editor of the Academy.

Oct. 6. Albemarle Street.

SIR,—There are a few points connected with the destruction of Byron's Autobiography upon which a great deal of misconception exists, and upon which I should therefore be glad to say a few words.

1. To those who doubt the entire destruction of the MS., I may state that I was eye-witness to the burning of it and of the only copy existing of it, in the drawing-room of 50, Albemarle Street.

2. The proposal to destroy it originated, I believe, with my Father, the late Mr. John Murray; and his reason for making it (as he has stated in a letter to Mr. R. W. Horton, printed in No. 185 of the 'Quarterly Review') was his 'regard for Lord Byron's memory, and respect for his surviving family' . . . 'since it was surmised that the publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter.' The friends of Lord and Lady Byron 'united in wishing for its destruction.' The following persons were previously consulted, as a matter of courtesy, and were present at the burning—Mr. Hobhouse, as executor and friend of Lord Byron; Colonel Doyle, as a friend of Lady Byron (who had actually offered 2,000*l.* for the MSS., which she did not pay); Mr. Wilmot Horton, as friend of the Hon. Mrs. Leigh; my Father, and Mr. Moore, who alone for some time opposed the destruction. [To these names must be added that of Mr. Luttrell.]

3. The MS. was, at the time of its destruction, the absolute property of my Father, having been purchased by him in November, 1821, from Mr. Moore (to whom Lord Byron had given it) for 2,000*l.*, in consideration of which sum Moore covenanted to edit the papers, and to supply an account of the subsequent events of Lord Byron's life. On May the 6th, 1822, however, a second deed was executed, at Mr. Moore's request, giving to him the power of redeeming the MS., '*during the life of the said Lord Byron*,' on the repayment by either of them of the 2,000*l.* This condition Moore did not fulfil: consequently his interest in the MS. entirely ceased on Byron's death; by which event the value of the MS. was greatly enhanced, probably doubled. This fact, no doubt, rendered Mr. Moore more than ever anxious to

recover the Autobiography, and he had secured the advance of 2,000*l.* on loan from friends in the City to enable him to do this.

The MS., however, by general consent, was destroyed, Mr. Moore, though reluctantly, concurring. Moore then paid to Mr. Murray the 2,000*l.*, for which payment Byron's friends offered to reimburse him; but he refused. So matters rested until 1828, when the appearance of Leigh Hunt's 'Byron and his Contemporaries' convinced my Father that an authentic Life of Byron was demanded, for which only Moore and he were possessed of the necessary materials. He therefore arranged with Moore to prepare the 'Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron,' published in 1830. For this Moore received the sum of 1,600*l.* But (and this is the point which, in justice to my Father's memory, I am anxious to state) '*over and above the sum so paid*,' Mr. Murray discharged Moore's bond with his creditors, upon which he had raised the 2,000*l.* paid by him immediately after Byron's death; together with the interest thereon and other charges, amounting to 1,020*l.* more. Thus making a total sum of 4,620*l.* (Signed) JOHN MURRAY.

The letter of the late Mr. Murray, alluded to in the second paragraph of the above, and published in the 'Quarterly Review,' June 1853, is also added as a 'pièce justificative' of much interest.

Letter from the late John Murray to Mr. (afterwards *Sir*) *Robert Wilmot Horton.*

Albemarle Street, May 19, 1824.

DEAR SIR,—On my return home last night I found your letter, dated the 27th, calling on me for a specific answer whether I acknowledged the accuracy of the statement of Mr. Moore, communicated in it. However unpleasant it is to me, your requisition of a specific answer obliges me to say that I cannot, by any means, admit the accuracy of that statement; and in order to explain to you how Mr. Moore's misapprehension may have arisen, and the ground upon which my assertion rests, I feel it necessary to trouble you with a statement of all the circumstances of the case, which will enable you to judge for yourself.

Lord Byron having made Mr. Moore a present of his Memoirs, Mr. Moore offered them for sale to Messrs. Longman and Co.,

who however declined to purchase them; Mr. Moore then made me a similar offer, which I accepted; and in November, 1821, a joint assignment of the Memoirs was made to me by Lord Byron and Mr. Moore, with all legal technicalities, in consideration of a sum of 2,000 guineas, which, on the execution of the agreement by Mr. Moore, I paid to him. Mr. Moore also covenanted, in consideration of the said sum, to act as Editor of the Memoirs, and to supply an account of the subsequent events of Lord Byron's life, &c.

Some months after the execution of this assignment, Mr. Moore requested me, as a great personal favour to himself and to Lord Byron, to enter into a second agreement, by which I should resign the absolute property which I had in the Memoirs, and give Mr. Moore and Lord Byron, or any of their friends, a power of redemption *during the life of Lord Byron*.—As the reason pressed upon me for this change was that their friends thought there were some things in the Memoirs that might be injurious to both, I did not hesitate to make this alteration at Mr. Moore's request; and, accordingly, on the 6th day of May, 1822, a second deed was executed, stating that, 'Whereas Lord Byron and Mr. Moore are now inclined to wish the said work not to be published, it is agreed that, if either of them shall, *during the life of the said Lord Byron*, repay the 2,000 guineas to Mr. Murray, the latter shall redeliver the Memoirs; but that, if the sum be not repaid *during the lifetime of Lord Byron*, Mr. Murray shall be at full liberty to print and publish the said Memoirs within Three Months[1] after the death of the said Lord Byron.' I need hardly call your particular attention to the words, carefully inserted twice over in this agreement, which limited its existence to the *lifetime of Lord Byron*; the reason of such limitation was obvious and natural—namely, that, although I consented to restore the work, *while Lord Byron should be alive* to direct the ulterior disposal of it, I would by no means consent to place it *after his death* at the disposal of any other person.

I must now observe that I had never been able to obtain possession of the original assignment, which was my sole lien on

[1] The words 'within Three Months' were substituted for 'immediately,' at Mr. Moore's request—and they appear in pencil, in his own handwriting, upon the original draft of the deed, which is still in existence.

this property, although I had made repeated applications to Mr. Moore to put me into possession of the deed, which was stated to be in the hands of Lord Byron's banker. Feeling, I confess, in some degree alarmed at the withholding the deed, and dissatisfied at Mr. Moore's inattention to my interests in this particular, I wrote urgently to him in March, 1823, to procure me the deed, and at the same time expressed my wish that the second agreement should either be cancelled or *at once executed.*

Finding this application unavailing, and becoming, by the greater lapse of time, still more doubtful as to what the intentions of the parties might be, I, in March, 1824, repeated my demand to Mr. Moore in a more peremptory manner, and was in consequence at length put into possession of the original deed. But, not being at all satisfied with the course that had been pursued towards me, I repeated to Mr. Moore my uneasiness at the terms on which I stood under the second agreement, and renewed my request to him that he would either cancel it, or execute its provisions by the immediate redemption of the work, in order that I might exactly know what my rights in the property were. He requested time to consider of this proposition. In a day or two he called, and told me that he would adopt the latter alternative—namely, the redemption of the Memoirs—as he had found persons who were ready to advance the money on *his insuring his life*; and he promised to conclude the business on the first day of his return to town, by paying the money and giving up the agreement. Mr. Moore did return to town, but did not, that I have heard of, take any proceedings for insuring his life; he positively neither wrote nor called upon me as he had promised to do (though he was generally accustomed to make mine one of his first houses of call);—nor did he take any other step, that I am aware of, to show that he had any recollection of the conversation which had passed between us previous to his leaving town, until *the death of Lord Byron* had, *ipso facto*, cancelled the agreement in question, and completely restored my absolute rights over the property of the Memoirs.

You will therefore perceive that there was no verbal agreement in existence between Mr. Moore and me, at the time I made a verbal agreement with you to deliver the Memoirs to be destroyed. Mr. Moore might undoubtedly, *during Lord Byron's life*, have obtained possession of the Memoirs, if he had pleased to do so;

he however neglected or delayed to give effect to our verbal agreement, which, as well as the written instrument to which it related, being cancelled by the death of Lord Byron, there was no reason whatsoever why I was not at that instant perfectly at liberty to dispose of the MS. as I thought proper. Had I considered only my own interest as a tradesman, I would have announced the work for immediate publication, and I cannot doubt that, under all the circumstances, the public curiosity about these Memoirs would have given me a very considerable profit beyond the large sum I originally paid for them; but you yourself are, I think, able to do me the justice of bearing witness that I looked at the case with no such feelings, and that my regard for Lord Byron's memory, and my respect for his surviving family, made me more anxious that the Memoirs should be immediately destroyed, since it was surmised that the publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter.

As I myself scrupulously refrained from looking into the Memoirs, I cannot, from my own knowledge, say whether such an opinion of the contents was correct or not; it was enough for me that the friends of Lord and Lady Byron united in wishing for their destruction. Why Mr. Moore should have wished to preserve them I did not nor will inquire; but, having satisfied myself that he had no right whatever in them, I was happy in having an opportunity of making, by a pecuniary sacrifice on my part, some return for the honour, and I must add the profit, which I had derived from Lord Byron's patronage and friendship. You will also be able to bear witness that—although I could not presume to impose an obligation on the friends of Lord Byron or Mr. Moore, by refusing to receive the repayment of the 2,000 guineas advanced by me—yet I had determined on the destruction of the Memoirs without any previous agreement for such repayment:—and you know the Memoirs were actually destroyed without any stipulation on my part, but even with a declaration that I had destroyed my own private property,—and I therefore had no claim upon any party for remuneration.

I remain, dear Sir,

Your faithful servant,

(Signed) JOHN MURRAY.

To R^t. Wilmot Horton, Esq.

'Greece in 1823 and 1824,' and more particularly Colonel Stanhope's 'Sketch,' and Mr. Finlay's 'Reminiscences' of Byron[1]—will have seen him just as he appeared to me during our long intimacy. I liked him a great deal too well to be an impartial judge of his character; but I can confidently appeal to the impressions he made upon the two above-mentioned witnesses of his conduct, under very trying circumstances, for a justification of my strong affection for him—an affection not weakened by the forty years of a busy and chequered life that have passed over me since I saw him laid in his grave.

The influence he had acquired in Greece was unbounded, and he had exerted it in a manner most useful to her cause. Lord Sidney Osborne, writing to Mrs. Leigh, said, that if Byron had never written a line in his life, he had done enough, during the last six months, in Greece, to immortalise his name. He added, that no one unacquainted with the circumstances of the case could have any idea of the difficulties he had overcome: he had reconciled the contending parties, and had given a character of humanity and civilisation to the warfare in which they were engaged, besides contriving to prevent them from offending their powerful neighbours in the Ionian Islands. I heard that Sir F. Adam, in a despatch to Lord Bathurst, bore testimony to his great qualities, and lamented his death as depriving the Ionian Government of the only man with whom they could act with safety. Mavrocordato, in his letter to Dr. Bowring, called him 'a great man,' and confessed that he was almost ignorant how to act when deprived of such a coadjutor. . . .

On Thursday, July 1, I heard that the 'Florida,' with the remains of Byron, had arrived in the Downs, and I went, the same evening, to Rochester. The next morning I went to Standgate Creek, and, taking a boat, went on board the vessel. There I found Colonel Leicester Stanhope, Dr. Bruno, Fletcher, Byron's valet, with three others of his servants. Three dogs that had belonged to my friend were playing about the deck. I could hardly bring myself to look at them. The vessel had got under weigh, and we beat up the river to Gravesend. I cannot describe what I felt during the five or six hours of our passage. I was the last person who shook hands with Byron when he left

[1] Reprinted below.

England in 1816. I recollected his waving his cap to me as the packet bounded off on a curling wave from the pier-head at Dover, and here I was now coming back to England with his corpse.

Poor Fletcher burst into tears when he first saw me, and wept bitterly when he told me the particulars of my friend's last illness. These have been frequently made public, and need not be repeated here. I heard, however, on undoubted authority, that, until he became delirious, he was perfectly calm; and I called to mind how often I had heard him say, that he was not apprehensive as to death itself, but as to how, from physical infirmity, he might behave at that inevitable hour. On one occasion he said to me, 'Let no one come near me when I am dying, if you can help it, and we happen to be together at the time.'

The 'Florida' anchored at Gravesend, and I returned to London; Colonel Stanhope accompanied me. This was on Friday, July 2. On the following Monday I went to Doctors' Commons and proved Byron's will. Mr. Hanson did so likewise. Thence I went to London Bridge, got into a boat, and went to London Docks Buoy, where the 'Florida' was anchored. I found Mr. Woodeson, the undertaker, on board, employed in emptying the spirit from the large barrel containing the box that held the corpse. This box was removed and placed on deck by the side of a leaden coffin. I stayed whilst the iron hoops were knocked off the box, but I could not bear to see the remainder of the operation, and went into the cabin. Whilst there I looked over the sealed packet of papers belonging to Byron, which he had deposited at Cefalonia, and which had not been opened since he left them there. Captain Hodgson of the 'Florida,' the captain's father, and Fletcher, were with me: we examined every paper, and did not find any will. Those present signed a document to that effect.

After the removal of the corpse into the coffin, and the arrival of the order from the Custom-house, I accompanied the undertaker in the barge with the coffin. There were many boats round the ship at the time, and the shore was crowded with spectators. We passed quietly up the river, and landed at Palace Yard stairs. Thence the coffin and the small chest containing the heart were carried to the house in George Street, and deposited in the room prepared for their reception. The

room was decently hung with black, but there was no other decoration than an escutcheon of the Byron arms, roughly daubed on a deal board.

On reaching my rooms in the Albany, I found a note from Mr. Murray, telling me that he had received a letter from Dr. Ireland, politely declining to allow the burial of Byron in Westminster Abbey; but it was not until the next day that, to my great surprise, I learnt, on reading the Doctor's note, that Mr. Murray had made the request to the Dean in my name; I thought that it had been settled that Mr. Gifford should sound the Dean of Westminster previously to any formal request being made. I wrote to Mr. Murray, asking him to inform the Dean that I had not made the request. Whether he did so, I never inquired.

I ascertained from Mrs. Leigh that it was wished the interment should take place at the family vault at Hucknall in Nottinghamshire. The utmost eagerness was shown, both publicly and privately, to get a sight of anything connected with Byron. Lafayette was at that time on his way to America, and a young Frenchman came over from the General at Havre, and wrote me a note requesting a sight of the deceased poet. The coffin had been closed, and his wishes could not be complied with. A young man came on board the 'Florida,' and in very moving terms besought me to allow him to take one look at him. I was sorry to be obliged to refuse, as I did not know the young man, and there were many round the vessel who would have made the same request. He was bitterly disappointed; and when I gave him a piece of the cotton in which the corpse had been wrapped, he took it with much devotion, and placed it in his pocketbook. Mr. Phillips, the Academician, applied for permission to take a likeness, but I heard from Mrs. Leigh that the features of her brother had been so disfigured by the means used to preserve his remains, that she scarcely recognised them. This was the fact; for I had summoned courage enough to look at my dead friend; so completely was he altered, that the sight did not affect me so much as looking at his handwriting, or anything that I knew had belonged to him.

The funeral started from Nottingham on July 16. Hodgson the translator of Juvenal, and Colonel Wildman of Newstead, attended as mourners.

The Mayor and Corporation of Nottingham joined the funeral procession. It extended about a quarter of a mile, and, moving very slowly, was five hours on the road to Hucknall. The view of it as it wound through the villages of Papplewick and Lindley excited sensations in me which will never be forgotten. As we passed under the hill of Annesley, 'crowned with the peculiar diadem of trees' immortalised by Byron, I called to mind a thousand particulars of my first visit to Newstead. It was dining at Annesley Park that I saw the first interview of Byron, after a long interval, with his early love, Mary Anne Chaworth.

The churchyard and the little church of Hucknall were so crowded that it was with difficulty we could follow the coffin up the aisle. The contrast between the gorgeous decorations of the coffin and the urn, and the humble village church, was very striking. I was told afterwards that the place was crowded until a late hour in the evening, and that the vault was not closed until the next morning.

I returned to Bunny Park. The Corporation of Nottingham offered me the freedom of the town, but I had no inclination for the ceremonies with which the acceptance of the honour would have been accompanied; I therefore declined it.

I should have mentioned that I thought Lady Byron ought to be consulted respecting the funeral of her husband; and I advised Mrs. Leigh to write to her, and ask what her wishes might be. Her answer was, if the deceased had left no directions she thought the matter might be left to the judgment of Mr. Hobhouse. There was a postscript, saying, 'If you like you may show this.'

I was present at the marriage of this lady with my friend, and handed her into the carriage which took the bride and bridegroom away. Shaking hands with Lady Byron, I wished her all happiness. Her answer was, 'If I am not happy it will be my own fault.'

NOTE (G).

CHARACTER OF LORD BYRON AS DRAWN BY THE REV. WILLIAM HARNESS; LORD BROUGHTON; MR. GEORGE FINLAY; AND COLONEL THE HON. LEICESTER STANHOPE (AFTERWARDS EARL OF HARRINGTON).

I.

AMONG the friendships which Byron formed at Harrow and Cambridge none was more ardent than that which subsisted between himself and William Harness. When he invites Moore (December 11, 1811) to Newstead, he tells him [1] that he will meet there 'a young friend named Harness, the earliest and dearest I ever had, from the third form at Harrow to this hour.' Nor has any one of the friends of the poet, with perhaps the exception of Lord Broughton, given to the world reminiscences more interesting or trustworthy than those which have been recently published by the Rev. A. G. L'Estrange in his 'Literary Life' of his late accomplished friend. By the courteous permission of his Biographer we are allowed to transfer to our pages Harness's recollections of his early and great friend.

'My acquaintance with Lord Byron began very early in life, on my first going to school at Harrow. I was then just twelve years old. I was lame from an early accident, and pale and thin in consequence of a severe fever, from which, though perfectly recovered in other respects, I still continued weak. This dilapidated condition of mine—perhaps my lameness more than anything else—seems to have touched Byron's sympathies. He saw me a stranger in a crowd; the very person likely to tempt the oppression of a bully, as I was utterly incapable of resisting it, and, in all the kindness of his generous nature, he took me under his charge. The first words he ever spoke to me, as far as I can recollect them, were, "If any fellow bullies you, tell me; and I'll thrash him if I can." His protection was not long needed; I was soon strong again, and able to maintain my own; but, as

[1] Moore's *Life*, ii. 107.

long as his help was wanted, he never failed to render it. In this manner our friendship began when we were both boys, he the elder of the two; and it continued, without the slightest interruption, till he left Harrow for Cambridge.

'After this there was a temporary cessation of intercourse. We wrote to each other on his first leaving school; but the letters, as is wont to be the case, became gradually less and less communicative and frequent, till they eventually ceased altogether. The correspondence seemed to have come to a conclusion by common consent, till an unexpected occasion of its renewal occurred on the appearance of his first collection of poems, the "Hours of Idleness."[1] This volume contained an early essay of his satirical powers against the head-master of his late school; and very soon after its publication I received a letter from Byron —short, cold, and cutting—reproaching me with a breach of friendship, because I had, as he was informed, traduced his poetry in an English exercise, for the sake of conciliating the favour of Dr. Butler. The only answer I returned to the letter was to send him the rough copy of my theme. It was on the Evils of Idleness. After a world of puerilities and commonplaces, it concluded by warning mankind in general, and the boys of Harrow in particular, if they would avoid the vice and its evils, to cultivate some accomplishment, that each might have an occupation of interest to engage his leisure, and be able to spend his "Hours of Idleness" as profitably as our late popular schoolfellow. The return of post brought me a letter from Byron, begging pardon for the unworthiness he had attributed

[1] The critiques on which called forth 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Byron seems always to have had an unfortunate and irresistible love of satire. Mr. Dyce (in Rogers's Table Talk) makes the following reference: 'At the house of the Rev. W. Harness I remember hearing Moore remark that he thought the natural bent of Byron's genius was to satirical and burlesque poetry. On this Mr. Harness observed: "When Byron was at Harrow, he one day, seeing a young acquaintance at a short distance who was a violent admirer of Bona parte, roared out

'"Bold Robert Speer was Bony's bad precursor:
Bob was a bloody dog, but Bonaparte a worser."

Moore immediately wrote the lines down with the intention of inserting them in his "Life of Byron," which he was then preparing; but they do appear in it.'

to me, and acknowledging that he had been misinformed. Thus our correspondence was renewed; and it was never again interrupted till after his separation from Lady Byron and final departure from his country.'

'Whatever faults Lord Byron might have had towards others, to myself he was always uniformly affectionate. I have many slights and neglects towards him to reproach myself with; but, on his part, I cannot call to mind, during the whole course of our intimacy, a single instance of caprice or unkindness.'

Lord Byron, after his return from Greece, invited Moore, as we have seen above, to Newstead, telling him that he would meet his friend Harness. Moore, however, does not seem to have been of the party, but Harness describes it thus:—

'When Byron returned, with the MS. of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" in his portmanteau, I paid him a visit at Newstead. It was winter—dark, dreary weather—the snow upon the ground; and a straggling, gloomy, depressing, partially-inhabited place the Abbey was. Those rooms, however, which had been fitted up for residence were so comfortably appointed, glowing with crimson hangings, and cheerful with capacious fires, that one soon lost the melancholy feeling of being domiciled in the wing of an extensive ruin. Many tales are related or fabled of the orgies which, in the poet's early youth, had made clamorous these ancient halls of the Byrons. I can only say that nothing in the shape of riot or excess occurred when I was there. The only other visitor was Dr. Hodgson, the translator of Juvenal,[1] and nothing could be more quiet and regular than the course of our days. Byron was retouching, as the sheets passed through the press, the stanzas of "Childe Harold." Hodgson was at work in getting out the ensuing number of the "Monthly Review," of which he was principal editor. I was reading for my degree. When we met, our general talk was of poets and poetry—of who could or who could not write; but it occasionally rose into very serious discussions on religion. Byron, from his early education in Scotland, had been taught to identify the principles of Christianity with the extreme dogmas of Calvinism.

[1] Afterwards Provost of Eton.

His mind had thus imbibed a most miserable prejudice, which appeared to be the only obstacle to his hearty acceptance of the Gospel. Of this error we were most anxious to disabuse him The chief weight of the argument rested with Hodgson, who was older, a good deal, than myself. I cannot even now—at a distance of more than fifty years—recall those conversations without a deep feeling of admiration for the judicious zeal and affectionate earnestness (often speaking with tears in his eyes) which Dr. Hodgson evinced in his advocacy of the truth. The only difference, except perhaps in the subjects talked about, between our life at Newstead Abbey and that of the quiet country families around us, was the hours we kept. It was, as I have said, winter, and the days were cold; and, as nothing tempted us to rise early, we got up late. This flung the routine of the day rather backward, and we did not go early to bed. My visit to Newstead lasted about three weeks, when I returned to Cambridge to take my degree.'

Shortly after this Harness took orders and went to reside at a remote country curacy in Hampshire. It was Byron's intention to dedicate to the country curate the first cantos of 'Childe Harold,' then on the eve of publication, but he was restrained by the 'fear lest it should injure him in his profession.'

'From this time,' writes Mr. Harness, 'our paths lay much asunder. Byron returned to London. His poem was published. The success was instantaneous; and he "awoke one morning and found himself famous." I was in orders, and living an almost solitary life in a country curacy; but we kept up a rather rapid interchange of letters. He sent me his poems as they now appeared in rather quick succession; and during my few weeks' holidays in London we saw one another very often of a morning at each other's rooms, and not unfrequently again in society of an evening. So far, and for these few years, all that I saw or heard of his career was bright and prosperous: kindness and poetry at home, smiles and adulation abroad. But then came his marriage; and then the rupture with his wife; and then his final departure from England. He became a victim of that revolution of popular feeling which is ever incident to the

spoilt children of society, when envy and malice obtain a temporary ascendancy, and succeed in knocking down and trampling any idol of the day beneath their feet, who may be wanting in the moral courage required to face and out-brave them.

'Such was not the spirit that animated Byron. He could not bear to look on the altered countenances of his acquaintances. To his susceptible temperament and generous feelings, the reproach of having ill-used a woman must have been poignant in the extreme. It was repulsive to his chivalrous character as a gentleman; it belied all he had written of the devoted fervour of his attachments; and rather than meet the frowns and sneers which awaited him in the world, as many a less sensitive man might have done, he turned his back on them and fled. He would have drawn himself up, and crossed his arms and curled his lip, and looked disdainfully on any amount of clamorous hostility; but he stole away from the ignominy of being silently cut. His whole course of conduct, at this crisis of his life, was an inconsiderate mistake. He should have remained to learn what the accusations against him really were; to expose the exaggerations, if not the falsehoods, of the grounds they rested on; or, at all events, to have quietly abided the time when the London world should have become wearied of repeating its vapid scandals, and returned to its senses respecting him. That change of feeling did come—and not long after his departure from England—but he was at a distance, and could not be persuaded to return to take advantage of it.

'Of the matrimonial quarrel I personally know nothing; nor, with the exception of Dr. Lushington, do I believe that there is anybody living who has any certain knowledge about the matter. The marriage was never one of reasonable promise. The bridegroom and the bride were ill-assorted. They were two only children, and two *spoilt* children. I was acquainted with Lady Byron as Miss Milbanke. The parties of Lady Milbanke, her mother, were frequent and agreeable, and composed of that mixture of fashion, literature, science, and art, than which there is no better society. The daughter was not without a certain amount of prettiness or cleverness; but her manner was stiff and formal, and gave one the idea of her being self-willed and self-opinionated. She was almost the only young, pretty, well-dressed girl we ever saw who carried no cheerfulness along with

her. I seem to see her now, moving slowly along her mother's drawing-rooms, talking to scientific men and literary women, without a tone of emotion in her voice or the faintest glimpse of a smile upon her countenance. A lady who had been on intimate terms with her from their mutual childhood once said to me, "If Lady Byron has a heart, it is deeper seated and harder to get at than anybody else's heart whom I have ever known." And though several of my friends whose regard it was no slight honour to have gained—as Mrs. Siddons, Joanna Baillie, Maria Edgeworth, and others of less account,—were never heard to speak of Lady Byron except in terms of admiration and attachment, it is certain that the impression which she produced on the majority of her acquaintance was unfavourable: they looked upon her as a reserved and frigid sort of being whom one would rather cross the room to avoid than be brought into conversation with unnecessarily. Such a person, whatever quality might have at first attracted him—(could it have been her coldness?)—was not likely to acquire or retain any very powerful hold upon Byron. At the beginning of their married life, when first they returned to London society together, one seldom saw two young persons who appeared to be more devoted to one another than they were. At parties, he would be seen hanging over the back of her chair, scarcely talking to anybody else, eagerly introducing his friends to her, and, if they did not go away together, himself handing her to her carriage. This outward show of tenderness, so far as my memory serves me, was observed and admired as exemplary, till after the birth of their daughter. From that time the world began to drop its voice into a tone of compassion when speaking of Lady Byron, and to whisper tales of the misery she was suffering—poor thing—on account of the unkindness of her husband.

'The first instances of his ill-usage which were heard, were so insignificant as to be beneath recording. "The poor lady had never had a comfortable meal since their marriage." "Her husband had no fixed hour for breakfast, and was always too late for dinner." "At his express desire, she had invited two elderly ladies[1] to meet them in her opera-box. Nothing could be more courteous as his manner to them, while they remained; but no sooner

[1] Mrs. Joanna Baillie and her sister.

had they gone than he began to annoy his wife by venting his ill-humour, in a strain of bitterest satire, against the dress and manners of her friends." There were some relations of Lady Byron whom, after repeated refusals, he had reluctantly consented to dine with. When the day arrived he insisted on her going alone, alleging his being unwell as an excuse for his absence. It was summer time. Forty years ago people not only dined earlier than they do now, but by daylight; and after the assembled party were seated at table, he amused himself by driving backwards and forwards opposite the dining-room windows.

'There was a multitude of such nonsensical stories as these, which one began to hear soon after Ada's birth; and I believe I have told the worst of them. No doubt, as the things occurred, they must have been vexatious enough, but they do not amount to grievous wrongs. They were faults of temper, not moral delinquencies; a thousand of them would not constitute an injury. Nor does one know to what extent they may have been provoked. They would, in all probability, have ceased, had they been gently borne with—and perhaps were only repeated because the culprit was amused by witnessing their effects. At all events they were no more than a sensible woman, who had either a proper feeling for her husband's reputation, or a due consideration of her own position, would have readily endured; and a really good wife would never have allowed herself to talk about them. And yet it was by Lady Byron's friends, and as coming immediately from her, that I used to hear them. The complaints, at first so trifling, gradually acquired a more serious character. "Poor Lady Byron was afraid of her life." "Her husband slept with loaded pistols by his bedside, and a dagger under his pillow." Then there came rumours of cruelty—no one knew of what kind, or how severe. Nothing was definitely stated. But it was on all hands allowed to be "very bad—very bad indeed." And as there was nothing to be known, everybody imagined what they pleased.

'But whatever Lord Byron's treatment of his wife may have been, it could not have been all evil. Any injuries she suffered must have occurred during moody and angry fits of temper. They could not have been habitual or frequent. His conduct was not of such a description as to have utterly extinguished whatever love she might have felt at her marriage, or to have

left any sense of terror or aversion behind it. This is evident from facts. Years after they had met for the last time, Lady Byron went with Mrs. Jameson, from whom I repeat the circumstance, to see Thorwaldsen's statue of her husband, which was at Sir Richard Westmacott's studio. After looking at it in silence for a few moments, the tears came into her eyes, and she said to her companion, "It is very beautiful, but not so beautiful as my *dear* Byron." However interrupted by changes of caprice or irritability, the general course of her husband's conduct must have been gentle and tender, or it never would, after so long a cessation of intercourse, have left such kindly impressions behind it. I have, indeed, reason to believe that these feelings of affectionate remembrance lingered in the heart of Lady Byron to the last. Not a fortnight before her death, I dined in company with an old lady who was at the time on a visit to her. On this lady's returning home, and mentioning whom she had met, Lady Byron evinced great curiosity to learn what subjects we had talked about, and what I had heard of them, "because I had been such a friend of her husband's." This instance of fond remembrance, after an interval of more than forty years, in a woman of no very sensitive nature—a woman of more intellect than feeling—conveys to my mind no slight argument in defence of Byron's conduct as a husband. His wife, though unrelenting, manifestly regretted his loss. May not some touch of remorse for the exile to which she had dismissed him—for the fame over which she had cast a cloud—for the energies which she had diverted from their course of useful action in the Senate,[1] to be wasted in no honourable idleness abroad—and for the so early death to which her unwife-like conduct doomed him, have mingled its bitterness with the pain of that regret?

'But what do I know of Byron? The ill I will speak of presently. Personally, I know nothing but good of him. Of what he became in his foreign banishment, when removed from all his natural ties and hereditary duties, I, personally, am ignorant. In all probability he deteriorated; he would have been more than human if he had not. But when I was in the habit of familiarly seeing him, he was kindness itself. At a time when Coleridge was in great embarrassment, Rogers, when [illegible] on Byron, chanced to mention it. He immediately went

[1] He had made some good speeches in the House.

to his writing-desk, and brought back a cheque for a hundred pounds, and insisted on its being forwarded to Coleridge. "I did not like taking it," said Rogers, who told me the story, "for I knew that he was in want of it himself." His servants he treated with a gentle consideration for their feelings which I have seldom witnessed in any other, and they were devoted to him. At Newstead there was an old man who had been butler to his mother, and I have seen Byron, as the old man waited behind his chair at dinner, pour out a glass of wine and pass it to him when he thought we were too much engaged in conversation to observe what he was doing. The transaction was a thing of custom; and both parties seemed to flatter themselves that it was clandestinely effected. A hideous old woman, who had been brought in to nurse him when he was unwell at one of his lodgings, and whom few would have cared to retain about them longer than her services were required, was carried with him, in improved attire, to his chambers in the Albany, and was seen, after his marriage, gorgeous in black silk at his house in Piccadilly. She had done him a service, and he could not forget it. Of his attachment to his friends, no one can read Moore's Life and entertain a doubt. He required a great deal from them—not more, perhaps, than he, from the abundance of his love, freely and fully gave—but more than they had to return. The ardour of his nature must have been in a normal state of disappointment. He imagined higher qualities in them than they possessed, and must very often have found his expectations sadly balked by the dulness of talk, the perversity of taste, or the want of enthusiasm, which he encountered on a better or rather longer acquaintance. But, notwithstanding, I have never yet heard anybody complain that Byron had once appeared to entertain a regard for him, and had afterwards capriciously cast him off.'

But Harness is not blind to Byron's infirmities.

'Byron had one pre-eminent fault—a fault which must be considered as deeply criminal by every one who does not, as I do, believe it to have resulted from monomania. He had a morbid love of a bad reputation. There was hardly an offence of which he would not, with perfect indifference, accuse himself. An old schoolfellow, who met him on the Continent, told me that he would continually write paragraphs against himself in the foreign journals, and delight in their republication by the English

newspapers as in the success of a practical joke. When anybody has related anything discreditable of Byron, assuring me that it must be true, for he had heard it from himself, I have always felt that he could not have spoken with authority, and that, in all probability, the tale was a pure invention. If I could remember, and were willing to repeat, the various misdoings which I have from time to time heard him attribute to himself, I could fill a volume. But I never believed them. I very soon became aware of this strange idiosyncrasy. It puzzled me to account for it; but there it was—a sort of diseased and distorted vanity. The same eccentric spirit would induce him to report things which were false with regard to his family, which anybody else would have concealed though true. He told me more than once that his father was insane and killed himself.'

'What Byron's reasons could have been for thus calumniating, not only himself, but the blood that was flowing in his veins, who can divine? But, for some reason or other, it seemed to be his determined purpose to keep himself unknown to the great body of his fellow-creatures—to present himself to their view in moral masquerade, and to identify himself in their imaginations with Childe Harold and the Corsair, between which characters and his own—as God and education had made it—the most microscopic inspection would fail to discern a single point of resemblance.

'Except this love of an ill name—this tendency to malign himself—this hypocrisy reversed, I have no personal knowledge whatever of any evil act or evil disposition of Lord Byron's. I once said this to a gentleman[1] who was well acquainted with Lord Byron's London life. He expressed himself astonished at what I said. "Well," I replied, "do you know any harm of him but what he told you himself?" "Oh, yes, a hundred things!" "I don't want you to tell me a hundred things, I shall be content with one." Here the conversation was interrupted. We were at dinner—there was a large party, and the subject was again renewed at table. But afterwards in the drawing-room, Mr. Drury came up to me and said, "I have been thinking of what you were saying at dinner. I do *not* know any harm of Byron but what he has told me of himself."

[1] The Rev. Henry Drury.

II.

No Life of Lord Byron can be complete without the following beautiful tribute by Lord Broughton. It is extracted from the pamphlet originally printed for private distribution in 1844, but published in the Appendix to his 'Travels in Albania,' 2 vols. 8vo., London, 1855, in which Lord Broughton defended his friend from the charge of irreligion brought against him in the House of Lords by Dr. Blomfield, Bishop of London.

'Lord Byron had hard measure dealt to him in his lifetime, but he did not die without leaving behind him friends, deeply and affectionately attached friends, whom the Bishop himself would despise if they suffered this attack to pass unnoticed. Those friends, however, do not prefer their late much-loved associate to truth—they would not sacrifice the best interests of society at the shrine even of his surpassing fame. They were not blind to the defects of his character, nor of his writings, but they know that some of the gravest accusations levelled against him had no foundation in fact; and perhaps the time may come, when justice may be done to the dead without injury to the feelings of the living. Even now it may be permitted to say something of him, and it will be said by one who, perhaps, knew him as well as he was known by any human being.

'Lord Byron had failings—many failings certainly, but he was untainted with any of the baser vices; and his virtues, his good qualities, were all of the higher order. He was honourable and open in all his dealings—he was generous, and he was kind. He was affected by the distress, and rarer still he was pleased with the prosperity of others. Tender-hearted he was to a degree not usual with our sex—and he shrunk, with feminine sensibility, from the sight of cruelty. He was true-spoken—he was affectionate—he was very brave, if that be any praise; but his courage was not the result of physical coolness or indifference to danger; on the contrary, he entertained apprehensions and adopted precautions, of which he made no secret, and was by no means ashamed. His calmness and presence of mind in the hour of peril, were the offspring of reflection and of a fixed resolution to act becomingly and well. He was alive to every indication of

good feeling in others—a generous or noble sentiment, a trait of tenderness or devotion, not only in real, but in imaginary characters, affected him deeply—even to tears. He was, both by his habits and his nature, incapable of any mean compliance, any undue submission towards those who command reverence and exact flattery from men of the highest genius; and it will be the eternal praise of his writings, as it was one of the merits of his conversation, that he threw no lustre on any exploit, however brilliant, any character, however exalted, which had not contributed to the happiness or welfare of mankind.

'Lord Byron was totally free from envy and from jealousy; and both in public and in private, spoke of the literary merits of his contemporaries in terms which did justice to them and honour to himself.[1] He was well aware of his own great reputation; but he was neither vain-glorious, nor over-bearing; nor attached to his productions even that value which was universally granted to them, and which they will, probably, for ever maintain.

'Of his lesser qualities very little need be said, because his most inveterate detractors have done justice to his powers of pleasing, and to the irresistible charms of his general deportment. There was, indeed, something about him, not to be definitely described, but almost universally felt, which captivated those around him, and impressed them, in spite of occasional distrusts, with an attachment not only friendly but fixed. Part of this fascination may, doubtless, be ascribed to the entire self-abandonment, the incautious, it may be said the dangerous, sincerity of his private conversation; but his very weaknesses were amiable; and, as has been said of a portion of his virtues, were of a feminine character—so that the affection felt for him was as that for a favourite and sometimes froward sister.

'In mixed society Lord Byron was not talkative, neither did he attempt to surprise by pointed or by humorous remarks; but in all companies he held his own, and that too without unbecoming rivalry with his seniors in age and reputation, and without any offensive condescension towards his inferior associates. In more familiar intercourse he was a gay companion and a free, but he never transgressed the bounds of good breeding, even for a

[1] An exception must, of course, be made as regards Southey, who assailed him personally with unsparing bitterness, and whose merit he would never acknowledge.

moment. Indeed he was, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman.'

III.

The reminiscences of Mr. Finlay and Colonel Stanhope commend themselves not only by their intrinsic interest; but having received the 'imprimatur' of Lord Broughton, as we have seen in the extract given above from the 'Recollections of a Long Life,' they are here subjoined, with some unimportant omissions, as valuable aids towards the understanding of Byron's character.

(1)

Extracts of Letters from Mr. George Finlay to Colonel Stanhope.

'I met Lord B. for the first time at Metaxata, in Cephalonia, in the month of October, 1823. On calling, I found his Lordship had ridden out with Count Gamba; I resolved to wait for his return, and was shown his only public room, which was small and scantily furnished in the plainest manner. One table was covered for dinner, another and a chair were strewed with books, and many were ranged in order on the floor. I found the greater part of Walter Scott's novels, Mitford's "History of Greece," Sismondi's "Italian Republics," and an English translation of "Pausanias." After some time, his Lordship returned, and on entering the room, regarded me with a fixed, and it appeared to me, an anxious stare. I presented a letter of introduction, and he sat down upon the sofa, still examining me; I felt the reception more poetical than agreeable: but he immediately commenced his fascinating conversation. I dined with him, and we naturally conversed almost entirely about Greece; yet chiefly on the manners of the people, their character, the difficulties of travelling, and the antiquities. I thought he seemed to regard my visit too much in the light of a tour, and asked for information on the state of parties in the Morea. He gave me it instantly; and in the course of conversation remarked, that I was far too enthusiastic, and too fresh from Germany: he exclaimed, laughing "You have too much *Schwärmerey*." I replied, that I expected to find the Greeks the same *canaille* that existed in the days of Themistocles. Lord B. smiled, and said, "My opinion of the Greeks remains unchanged—I did not, indeed, think that with

their character they would have achieved what they have done so soon; yet I always thought they deserved liberty, and they have proved it. The Turks, however, are far better fellows, far more gentlemanly, and I used to like them better when amongst them." Lord Byron uttered this in an unemphatical, and rather affectedly monotonous tone. I afterwards observed, that he adopted this tone not unfrequently, whenever he uttered any thing which diverged from the commonest style of conversation. Whenever he commenced a sentence which showed that the subject had engaged his mind, and that his thoughts were sublime, he checked himself, and finished a broken sentence, either with an indifferent smile, or with this annoying tone. I thought he had adopted it to conceal his feelings, when he feared to trust his tongue with the sentiments of his heart. Often, it was evident, he did it to avoid betraying the author, or rather the poet. In mere satire and wit his genius ran wild, even in conversation. I left him quite delighted, charmed to find so great a man so agreeable, yet astonished that the author of "Childe Harold," the "Corsair," and "Manfred," should have said so little worth remembering.

'The next time we met was out riding. Lord Byron told me he had been struck at first by my resemblance to Shelley. "I thought you were Shelley's ghost," were his words. The resemblance, though it soon wore off, had likewise struck one of his Italian servants, who had called me the gentleman who is so like Mr. Shelley. I said I knew little of Shelley's works, but had been delighted with his translation of "Walpurgisnacht." Lord Byron—"Shelley was really a most extraordinary genius; but those who know him only from his works, know but half his merits: it was from his thoughts and his conversation poor Shelley ought to be judged. He was romance itself in his manners and his style of thinking. He was, however, quite mad with his metaphysics, and a bigot in the least pardonable way."

'We then conversed about Germany and its literature, and I found, to my astonishment, Lord Byron knew nothing of the language, though he was perfectly acquainted with its literature; with Goethe in particular, and with every passage of "Faust." He said nothing could be more sublime than the words of the Spirit of the Earth to Faust,[1] "Thou resemblest the spirit of thy

[1] ['Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,
Nicht mir!'
Faust, erster Theil. (Goethe, *Sämmt. Werke*, vol. xi. p. 24.)]

imagination, not me." I involuntarily repeated it in German, and he said, "Yes, those are the words." The scene of the monkeys had made a considerable impression on him, and I remember, on my saying I suppose Goethe meant to represent men transformed into monkeys, he exclaimed, "Suppose no such thing—suppose them veritable monkeys, and the satire is finer and deeper." After a few words on "Wilhelm Meister," I asked if he had read the "Wahlverwandtschaften." He said, he did not recollect the hard word, but inquired the signification of it.—I gave some stupid translation, as the "Choice Relationships." Lord Byron said, "Yes, yes, the Affinities of Choice—I recollect reading a translation, which I should think was not a very good one, for some parts seemed to border on the unintelligible." I replied, that I thought some parts of the original bordered on it likewise, though, perhaps, they were not within its limits.

'The review of Goethe's "Aus Meinem Leben" in the Edinburgh, he said, "was harsh and unfeeling. The literature of Europe is under obligations to Goethe, which entitled him to more respect; but often less ability is required to misrepresent and ridicule than to understand genius."

'I told Lord Byron I had seen the dedication of "Sardanapalus" on its way to Goethe before it had been printed, and the letter Goethe had written to the gentleman who had forwarded it, in which he mentioned that he had once commenced a translation of the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Lord Byron pulled up his horse, and exclaimed, with eagerness, "He had, had he? and what did the old gentleman mean by that?" I said I supposed he was struck by such an extraordinary specimen of early genius; but that he had abandoned his design, finding he could not understand some passages without assistance Lord Byron: "No, that is not the reason: you don't understand the tricks of authorship, but I can let you into the secret; there was more of the devil in me than in Goethe, and he was content to borrow my weapons against the Review, though I had wished to suppress the work. I remember another anecdote of Goethe. On the publication of 'Manfred,' Goethe gave translations of those passages which he considered bore the greatest resemblance to 'Faust,' to show my plagiarisms." I said, "I am sure, my Lord, you have no fear of being thought a plagiarist." He replied,

"No, not much, though they seem to be trying hard to prove m one, in England."'

'One day, at Cephalonia, after dinner, as I was going to rid back to Argostoli, Dr. Kennedy and Dr. Scott called; Lor Byron always took a siesta, and I thought he would not like th interruption, but I was wrong. The subject they called abou was interesting—some people who had been wounded in makin the road, whom Lord Byron's physician attended, under thei direction; and Dr. Kennedy had likewise much religious conver sation with his Lordship. I own I felt astonished to hear Lor Byron submit to lectures on his life, and his vanity, and the use lessness of his talents, which made me stare. The conversatio was excessively amusing. Dr. Kennedy had given Lord Byro some silly tracts which, to my utter astonishment, I found Byro had read. He flew to his room to show a passage of Sherlock quoted in one, which was in opposition to something urged b the Doctor, and forced Kennedy to own he had not read them himself, though he had given them to Lord Byron for his conver- sion. There was no argument, for though Byron was extremely fond of conversing on religious subjects, he seldom argued; single objections he would start, and strive to raise perplexities, and lead his adversary into contradictions, but I never heard him o any occasion enter the field as a professed deist. I remember h asked the Doctor if he believed in ghosts, read the account of th appearance of Samuel's spirit to Saul, and said it was one of th most sublime passages in Scripture; indeed, as has been ofte remarked, few people were better acquainted with the Scriptures and I have heard him say, that very few days ever passed withou his reading a chapter in a little pocket-bible, given him by Mr Leigh immediately before he left England, and which he alway kept in his bed-room.

'Before the end of the conversation with Kennedy, howeve he grew very warm—talked a little too violently, but calme again—asked Kennedy if he could not be a good Christia without believing in eternal perdition; and said he knew few h could abandon to such a fate. Kennedy referred to Scripture— Byron: "Well, I cannot believe that." We parted, and h politely insisted on another visit, as he said, to complete his co version.'

'My dear Stanhope,—I arrived at Missolonghi at the latter end of February, a few days after your departure. Lord Byron almost immediately informed me of the violent fit of illness which had attacked him in your room a few days before; he declared he believed it to be epilepsy, and seemed seriously alarmed. I conversed with him very often on the subject, and, for a month or more, he continually expressed his fears of a return of the fit. His own physician seemed, for a few days, to entertain the same opinion as his Lordship; but Millingen constantly asserted that the fit was not epilepsy. I once remarked that epilepsy was by no means a very dangerous disease, and that a man might live very long under it without suffering any very serious inconvenience, giving the instance of Cæsar. Lord Byron replied, very solemnly, "If it really prove epilepsy, I shall never have more than one fit, for I feel I could starve myself." He soon promised to send Odysseus what he could spare of the Committee's stores, and appeared anxious to attend the Congress at Salona, for the purpose of inviting him and Mavrocordato to which, I had visited Missolonghi.'

'In the evenings, Lord Byron was generally extremely communicative, and talked much of his youthful scenes at Cambridge, Brighton, and London; spoke very often of his friends, Mr. Hobhouse and Mr. Scrope B. Davies—told many anecdotes of himself which are well known, and many which were amusing from his narration, but which would lose their interest from another; but what astonished me the most was the ease with which he spoke of all those reports which were spread by his enemies—he gave his denials and explanations with the frankness of an unconcerned person.

'I often spoke to him about Newstead Abbey, which I had visited in 1821, a few months before leaving England. On informing him of the repairs and improvements which were then going on, he said, if he had been rich enough he should have liked to have kept it as the old abbey; but he enjoyed the excellent bargain he had made at the sale. A solicitor sent him a very long bill, and, on his grumbling at the amount, he said he was silenced by a letter, reminding him that he had received 20,000*l.* forfeit-money from the first purchaser. I mentioned the picture of his bear in the cottage near the lodge—the

Newfoundland dog and the verses on its tomb. He said, N
foundland dogs had twice saved his life, and that he could
live without one.

'He spoke frequently of the time he lived at Aberdeen. Th
house was near the college. He described the place, but I h
forgotten it. He said his mother's "lassack" used to put h
to bed at a very early hour, and then go to converse with l
lover; he had heard the house was haunted, and sometimes u
to get out of bed and run along the lobby in his shirt, till he s
a light, and there remain standing till he was so cold he w
forced to go to bed again. One night the servant returning,
grew frightened and ran towards his room; the maid saw h
and fled more frightened than he; she declared she had seen
ghost. Lord Byron said, he was so frightened at the maid,
kept the secret till she was turned away; and, he added, he nev
since kept a secret half so long.

'The first passion he ever felt was for a young lady who w
on a visit to his mother while they lived in Scotland; he was,
the time, about six years old, and the young lady about nine, y
he was almost ill on her leaving his mother's house to retu
home. He told me if I should ever meet the lady (giving r
her address), to ask her if she remembers him.

'On some conversation about the "English Bards and Scot
Reviewers," he gave, as a reason for his attacking many of t
persons included, that he was informed, some time before t
publication of the review, that the next number was to conta
an article on his poems which had been read at Holland House.
"Judge of my fever; was it not a pleasant situation for a you
author?"

'In conversation he used to deliver very different opinions
many authors from those contained in his works; in the one ca
he might be guided more by his judgment, and, in the othe
submit entirely to his own particular taste. I have quoted h
writings in opposition to his words, and he replied, "Never mi
what I print; that is not what I think." He certainly did n
consider much of the poetry of the present day as "possessi
buoyancy enough to float down the stream of time." I remark
he ought really to alter the passage in the preface of "Mari
Faliero," on living dramatic talent—he exclaimed, laughing, "I
mean me to erase the name of *moral me*?" In this manne

he constantly distinguished Milman, alluding to some nonsense in the "Quarterly Review."

'He was extremely amused with Blackwood's Magazine, and read it whenever he could get a number; he has frequently repeated to me passages of Ensign O'Doherty's poetry, which I had not read, and expressed great astonishment at the ability displayed by the author.

'On a gentleman present once asking his opinion of the works of a female author of some note, he said, "A bad imitation of me —all pause and start."

'On my borrowing Mitford's "History of Greece" from him, and saying I had read it once, and intended commencing it again in Greece; he said, "I hate the book; it makes you too well acquainted with the ancient Greeks, and robs antiquity of all its charms. History, in his hands, has no poetry."

'I was in the habit of praising Sir William Gell's "Itineraries" to Lord B., and he, on the other hand, took every opportunity of attacking his "Argolis," though his attacks were chiefly directed against the drawings, and particularly the view of the bay. He told me he was the author of the article on Sir W. Gell's "Argolis" in the "Monthly Review;" and said he had written two other articles in this work, but I have forgotten them.

'Whenever the drama was mentioned, he defended the unities most eagerly, and usually attacked Shakspeare. A gentleman present, on hearing his anti-Shakspearean opinions, rushed out of the room, and afterwards entered his protest most anxiously against such doctrines. Lord B. was quite delighted with this, and redoubled the severity of his criticism. I had heard that Shelley once said to Lord B. in his extraordinary way, "B., you are a most wonderful man." "How?" "You are envious of Shakspeare." I, therefore, never expressed the smallest astonishment at hearing Shakspeare abused; but remarked, it was curious that Lord B. was so strangely conversant in an author of such ipferior merit, and that he should so continually have the most melodious lines of Shakspeare in his mouth, as examples of blank verse. He said once, when we were alone, "I like to astonish Englishmen: they come abroad full of Shakspeare, and contempt for the dramatic literature of other nations; they think it blasphemy to find a fault in his writings, which are full of them. People talk of the tendency of my writings, and yet read the

sonnets to Master Hughes." Lord B. certainly did not admi
the French tragedians enthusiastically.

'I said to him, there is a subject for the drama which I belie
has never been touched, and which, I think, affords the greate
possible scope for the representation of all that is sublime i
human character—but then it would require an abandonment
the unities—the attack of Maurice of Saxony on Charles
which saved the Protestant religion; it is a subject of more tha
national interest. He said it was certainly a fine subject; but h
held that the drama could not exist without a strict adherence t
the unities; and besides, he knew well he had failed in hi
dramatic attempts, and that he intended to make no more. H
said he thought "Sardanapalus" his best tragedy.

'The memory of Lord B. was very extraordinary; it was no
the mere mechanical memory which can repeat the advertisement
of a newspaper and such nonsense; but of all the innumerabl
novels which he had read, he seemed to recollect perfectly th
story and every scene of merit.

'Once I had a bet with Mr. Fowke that Maurice of Orang
was not the grandson of Maurice of Saxony, as it ran in my hea
that Maurice was a son of Count Horn's sister. On applying fo
a decision of our bet to Lord B. he immediately told me I wa
wrong, that William of Orange was thrice married, and that h
had Maurice by a daughter of Maurice of Saxony: he repeate
the names of all the children. I said, "This is the most extra
ordinary instance of your memory I ever heard." He replied, "It'
not very extraordinary—I read it all a few days ago in Watson'
Philip II., and you will find it in a note at the bottom of the las
page but one (I think he said) of the second volume." He wen
to his bed-room, and brought the book, in which we found th
note he had repeated. It seemed to me wonderful enough tha
such a man could recollect the names of William of Orange'
children and their families even for ten minutes.'

'But I must finish, for I am sure I have fatigued you. I shal
feel very anxious to see every thing that is published in Englan
concerning Lord Byron; though I believe that, for some time, h
not be dealt more fairly with than during his life. Time
r, will soon put an end to all undue admiration an
s cant, and the world will ultimately form their estimat
ron's character from his writings and his publi

conduct; they can then justly enough estimate the greatness of his genius and his mind, and the real extent of his faults. The ridiculous calumnies which have found a moment's credit will very soon be utterly forgotten. Nor will it be from the cursory memoirs or anecdotes of his contemporaries that his character can be drawn. Those only who were personally acquainted with him can be aware of the influence which every passing event had over his mind, or know the innumerable modifications under which his character was daily presenting itself: even his writings took a shade of colouring from those around him. His passions and feelings were so lively that each occurrence made a strong impression, and his conduct became so entirely governed by impulse that he immediately and vehemently declared his sentiments. It is not wonderful, therefore, that instances of his inconsistency should be found; though in the most important actions of his life he has acted with no common consistency, and his death attests his sincerity. To attempt by scattered facts to illustrate his character is really useless. A hundred could be immediately told to prove him a miser; as many to prove him the most generous of men; an equal number, perhaps, to show he was nervously alive to the distresses of others, or heartlessly unfeeling; at times, that he indulged in every desire; at others, that he pursued the most determined system of self-denial; that he ridiculed his friends, or defended them with the greatest anxiety. At one time, he was all enthusiasm; at another, perfect indifference on the very same subject. All this would be true, and yet our inference most probably incorrect. Such hearts as Lord B.'s must become old at an early age, from the continual excitement to which they are exposed, and those only can judge fairly of him, even from his personal acquaintance, who knew him from his youth, when his feelings were warmer than they could be latterly. From some of those who have seen the whole course of his wonderful existence, we may, indeed, expect information; and it is information, not scandal, that will be sought for.

'I am, &c., yours, most sincerely,

'GEORGE FINLAY.

'Tripolitza, June, 1824.'

in his mind. She had wounded Lord Byron's pride by having refused his first offer of marriage; by having separated herself from him whom others assiduously courted; and by having resisted all the efforts of his genius to compel her again to yield to his dominion. Had Lady Byron been submissive, could she have stooped to become a caressing slave, like other ingenious slaves she might have governed her lord and master. But no; she had a mind too great, and was too much of an Englishwoman to bow so low. These contrarieties set Lord Byron's heart on fire, roused all his passions, gave birth, no doubt, to many of his sublimest thoughts, and impelled him impetuously forward in his zig-zag career. When angry or humorous, she became the subject of his wild sport; at other times, she seemed, though he loved her not, to be the mistress of his feelings, and one whom he in vain attempted to cast from his thoughts. Thus, in a frolicsome tone, I have heard him sketch characters; and, speaking of a certain acquaintance, say, "With the exception of Southey and Lady Byron, there is no one I hate so much!" This was a noisy shot—a sort of a *feu de joie*, that inflicted no wound, and left no scar behind. Lord Byron was in reality a good-natured man, and it was a violence to his nature, which he seldom practised, either to conceal what he thought, or to harbour revenge. In one conversation which I had with Lord Byron, he dwelt much upon the acquirements and virtues of Lady Byron, and even said she had committed no fault but that of having married him. The truth is, that he was not formed for marriage. His riotous genius could not bear restraint. No woman could have lived with him but one devoid of, or of subdued, feelings—an Asiatic slave. Lord Byron, it is well known, was passionately fond of his child; of this he gave me the following proof. He showed me a miniature of Ada, as also a clever description of her character, drawn by her mother, and forwarded to him by the person he most esteemed, his amiable sister. After I had examined the letter, while reflecting on its contents, I gazed intently on the picture; Lord Byron, observing me in deep meditation, impatiently said, "Well, well, what do you think of Ada?" I replied, "If these are true representations of Ada, and are not drawn to flatter your vanity, you have engrafted on her your virtues and your failings. She is in mind and feature the very image of her father." Never did I see man

feel more pleasure than Lord Byron felt at this remark; his eyes lightened with ecstasy.

'Lord Byron's mental and personal courage was unlike that of other men. To the superficial observer, his conduct seemed to be quite unsettled: this was really the case to a certain extent. His genius was boundless and excursive, and in conversation his tongue went rioting on

From grave to gay, from lively to severe.

Still, upon the whole, no man was more constant, and, I may almost say, more obstinate in the pursuit of some great objects. For example, in religion and politics, he seemed firm as a rock, though like a rock he was subjected to occasional rude shocks, the convulsions of agitated nature.'

'Lord Byron was no party politician. Lord Clare was the person whom he liked best, because he was his old school acquaintance. Mr. John Cam Hobhouse was his long-tried, his esteemed, and valued literary and personal friend. Death has severed these; but there is a soul in friendship that can never die. No man ever chose a nobler friend. Mr. Hobhouse has given many proofs of this, and among others, I saw him, from motives of high honour, destroy a beautiful poem of Lord Byron's, and, perhaps, the last he ever composed. The same reason that induced Mr. H. to tear this fine manuscript will, of course, prevent him or me from ever divulging its contents. Mr. Douglas Kinnaird was another for whom Lord Byron entertained the sincerest esteem: no less on account of his high social qualities than as a clear-sighted man of business, on whose discretion he could implicitly rely. Sir Francis Burdett was the politician whom he most admired. He used to say, "Burdett is an Englishman of the old school." He compared the Baronet to the statesmen of Charles the First's time, whom he considered the sternest and loftiest spirits that Britain had produced. Lord Byron entertained high aristocratic notions, and had much family pride. He admired, notwithstanding, the American institutions, but did not consider them of so democratic a nature as is generally imagined. He found, he said, many Englishmen and English writers more embued with liberal notions than those Americans and American authors with whom he was acquainted.'

'Lord Byron was chivalrous even to Quixotism. This might have lowered him in the estimation of the wise, had he not given some extraordinary proofs of the noblest courage. For example, the moment he recovered from that alarming fit which took place in my room, he inquired again and again, with the utmost composure, whether he was in danger. If in danger, he desired the physician honestly to apprise him of it, for he feared not death. Soon after this dreadful paroxysm, when Lord Byron, faint with over-bleeding, was lying on his sick bed, with his whole nervous system completely shaken, the mutinous Suliots, covered with dirt and splendid attires, broke into his apartment, brandishing their costly arms, and loudly demanding their wild rights. Lord Byron, electrified by this unexpected act, seemed to recover from his sickness; and the more the Suliots raged, the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime.

'At times, Lord Byron would become disgusted with the Greeks, on account of their horrid cruelties, their delays, their importuning him for money, and their not fulfilling their promises. That he should feel thus was very natural, although all this is just what might be anticipated from a people breaking loose from ages of bondage. We are too apt to expect the same conduct from men educated as slaves (and here be it remembered that the Greeks were the Helots of slaves) that we find in those who have, from their infancy, breathed the wholesome atmosphere of liberty.

'Most persons assume a virtuous character. Lord Byron's ambition, on the contrary, was to make the world imagine that he was a sort of "Satan," though occasionally influenced by lofty sentiments to the performance of great actions. Fortunately for his fame, he possessed another quality, by which he stood completely unmasked. He was the most ingenuous of men, and his nature, in the main good, always triumphed over his acting.

'There was nothing that he detested more than to be thought merely a great poet, though he did not wish to be esteemed inferior as a dramatist to Shakspeare. Like Voltaire, he was unconsciously jealous of, and for that reason abused, our immortal bard. His mind was absorbed in detecting Shakspeare's glaring defects, instead of being overpowered by his wonderful creative and redeeming genius. He assured me, that he was so far from being a "heaven-born poet," that he was not conscious of

possessing any talent in that way whe
burst upon his mind unexpectedly, as if
excited his wonder. He also declared, t
enthusiasm for poetry. I shook my head
to him, that although he had displayed a
reading and developing the characters of
Little of his own. He replied, "Often have
a perfect sceptic.
Like others I am not in love with what I poss
which I do not possess, and which is difficult
Byron was for shining as a hero of the first or
to take an active part in the civil and military
Greece. On this subject he consulted me; I
direct assumption of command by a foreigner,
would expose him to envy and danger without
cause. I wished him, by a career of perfect disinte
preserve a commanding influence over the Greeks, a
their great mediator. Lord Byron listened to me w
and courteous politeness, for he suspected my m
thought me envious—jealous of his increasing power; a
he did not altogether follow my advic
not, however, to be disarmed by politeness or suspicion
touched me not. for my mind was occupied with lofticr th
The attack was renewed the next day in a mild tone.
collision, however, of Lord Byron's arguments, sparkling
jests, and mine, regardless of his brilliancy and satire
earnestness, ended as usual in a storm. Though most anx
to assume high power, Lord Byron was still modest. He said
me, laughing, that if Napier came, he would *supersede himself*.
governor and commander of Western Greece, in favour of tha
distinguished officer. I laughed at this whimsical expression till
I made Lord Byron laugh too, and repeat over again that he
would "supersede himself."

'The mind of Lord Byron was like a volcano, full of fire and
wealth, sometimes calm, often dazzling and playful, but ever
threatening. It ran swift as the lightning from one subject to
another, and occasionally burst forth in passionate throes of
intellect, nearly allied to madness. A striking instance of this
sort of eruption I shall mention. Lord Byron's apartments were
immediately over mine at Missolonghi. In the dead of the night,

I was frequently startled from my sleep by the thunders of his Lordship's voice, either raging with anger or roaring with laughter, and rousing friends, servants, and, indeed, all the inmates of the dwelling from their repose. Even when in the utmost danger, Lord Byron contemplated death with calm philosophy. He was, however, superstitious, and dreadfully alarmed at the idea of going MAD, which he predicted would be his sad destiny.

'As a companion, no one could be more amusing; he had neither pedantry nor affectation about him, but was natural and playful as a boy. His conversation resembled a stream, sometimes smooth, sometimes rapid, and sometimes rushing down in cataracts; it was a mixture of philosophy and slang—of every thing—like his "Don Juan." He was a patient, and, in general, a very attentive listener. When, however, he did engage with earnestness in conversation, his ideas succeeded each other with such uncommon rapidity, that he could not control them. They burst from him impetuously; and although he both attended to, and noticed the remarks of others, yet he did not allow these to check his discourse for an instant.

'Lord Byron professed a deep-rooted antipathy to the English, though he was always surrounded by Englishmen, and, in reality, preferred them (as he did Italian women) to all others. I one day accused him of ingratitude to his countrymen. For many years, I observed, he had been, in spite of his faults, and although he had shocked all her prejudices, the pride, and I might almost say, the idol of Britain. He said, they must be a stupid race to worship such an idol, but he had at last cured their superstition, as far as his divinity was concerned, by the publication of his "Cain." It was true, I replied, that he had now lost their favour. This remark stung him to the soul, for he wished not only to occupy the public mind, but to command, by his genius, public esteem.'

'This extraordinary person, whom everybody was as anxious to see, and to know, as if he had been a Napoleon—the conqueror of the world, had a notion that he was hated, and avoided like one who had broken quarantine. He used often to mention to me the kindness of this or that insignificant individual, for having given him a good and friendly reception. In this particular, Lord Byron was capricious; for at Genoa he would scarcely see

anyone but those who lived in his own family; whereas, at Cephalonia, he was to everyone and at all times accessible. At Genoa he acted the misanthropist. At Cephalonia he appeared in his genuine character, doing good, and rather courting than shunning society.

'Lord Byron conceived that he possessed a profound knowledge of mankind, and of the working of their passions. In this he judged right. He could fathom every mind and heart but his own, the extreme depths of which none ever reached. On my arrival from England at Cephalonia, his Lordship asked me what new publications I had brought out. Among others I mentioned "The Springs of Action." "Springs of Action!" said Lord Byron, stamping with rage with his lame foot, and then turning sharply on his heel, "I don't require to be taught on this head. I know well what are the Springs of Action." Some time afterwards, while speaking on another subject, he desired me to lend him "The Springs of Action." He then suddenly changed the conversation to some humorous remarks, for the purpose of diverting my attention. I could not, however, forbear reminding him of his former observations, and his furious stamp.

'Avarice and great generosity were among Lord Byron's qualities: these contrarieties are said not unfrequently to be united in the same person. As an instance of Lord Byron's parsimony, he was constantly attacking Count Gamba, sometimes, indeed, playfully, but more often with the bitterest satire, for having purchased for the use of his family, while in Greece, 500 dollars' worth of cloth. This he used to mention as an instance of the Count's imprudence and extravagance. Lord Byron told me one day, with a tone of great gravity, that this 500 dollars would have been most serviceable in promoting the siege of Lepanto: and, that he never would, to the last moment of his existence, forgive Gamba, for having squandered away his money in the purchase of cloth. No one will suppose that Lord Byron could be serious in such a denunciation; he entertained, in reality, the highest opinion of Count Gamba, who, both on account of his talents and devotedness to his friend, merited his Lordship's esteem.'

'Lord Byron's reading was desultory, but extensive; his memory was retentive to an extraordinary extent. He was partial to the Italian poets, and is said to have borrowed from

them. Their fine thoughts he certainly associated with his own, but with such skill, that he could not be accused of plagiarism. Lord Byron possessed, indeed, a genius absolutely boundless, and could create with such facility that it would have been irksome to him to have become a servile imitator. He was original in all things, but especially as a poet.

'The study of voyages and travels was that in which he most delighted; their details he seemed actually to devour. He would sit up all night reading them. His whole soul was absorbed in these adventures, and he appeared to personify the traveller. Lord Byron had a particular aversion to business; his familiar letters were scrawled out at a great rate, and resembled his conversations. Rapid as were his tongue and his pen, neither could keep pace with the quick succession of ideas that flashed across his mind. He hated nothing more than writing formal official letters; this drudgery he would generally put off from day to day, and finish by desiring Count Gamba, or some other friend, to perform the task. No wonder that Lord Byron should dislike this dry anti-poetic work, and which he, in reality, performed with so much difficulty. Lord Byron's arduous, yet unsuccessful, labours in this barren field, put me in mind of the difficulty which one of the biographers of Addison describes this politician to have experienced when attempting to compose an official paragraph for the Gazette, announcing the death of the Queen. This duty, after a long and ineffectual attempt, the minister, in despair, handed over to a clerk, who (not being a genius, but a man of business) performed it in an instant.

'Not less was Lord Byron's aversion to reading than to writing official documents; these he used to hand over to me, pretending, spite of all my protestations to the contrary, that I had a passion for documents. When once Lord Byron had taken any whim into his head, he listened not to contradiction, but went on laughing and satirizing, till his joke had triumphed over argument and fact. Thus I, for the sake of peace, was sometimes silent, and suffered him to good-naturedly bully me into reading over, or, rather, yawning over, a mass of documents dull and uninteresting.

'Lord Byron once told me, in a humorous tone, but apparently quite in earnest, that he never could acquire a competent knowledge of arithmetic. Addition and subtraction he said he could,

though with some difficulty, accomplish. The mechanism of the rule of three pleased him, but then division was a puzzle he could not muster up sufficient courage to unravel. I mention this, to show of how low a cast Lord Byron's capacity was in some commonplace matters, where he could not command attention. The reverse was the case on subjects of a higher order, and in those trifling ones, too, that pleased his fancy. Moved by such themes, the impulses of his genius shot forth, by day and night, from his troubled brain, electric sparks or streams of light, like blazing meteors. Critics may disapprove of my narrating facts like these, as illustrative of his character—of my showing his strong and feeble side—his virtues and his failings. I crave your mercy, critics ; I know no law of composition, but that paramount one of truth. My crime is that of having gone beyond my depth—of having presumptuously attempted to give a sketch of one of the most eccentric and original geniuses that ever existed.'

'Once established at Missolonghi, it required some great impetus to move Lord Byron from that unhealthy swamp. On one occasion, when irritated by the Suliots, and the constant applications for money, he intimated his intention to depart. The citizens of Missolonghi and the soldiers grumbled, and communicated to me, through Dr. Meyer, their discontent. I repeated what I had heard to Lord Byron. He replied, calmly, that he would rather be cut to pieces than imprisoned, for he came to aid the Greeks in their struggle for liberty, and not to be their slave. No wonder that the "Hellenists" endeavoured to impede Lord Byron's departure, for even I, a mere soldier, could not escape from Missolonghi, Athens, Corinth, or Salona, without considerable difficulty. Some time previous to Lord Byron's death, he began to feel a restlessness and a wish to remove to Athens or to Zante.'

NOTE (H).

Allusion has been made by our author in the text (p. 316) to Wilhelm Müller's 'Lay on the Seven and Thirty Cannon Shots Fired by the Order of Mavrocordato on the Evening of Byron's Death (April 19).' As this poem well

illustrates the profound impression made on the heart of cultivated Europe when the sad news spread over it. the Editor considers it advisable to print the original from Wilhelm Müller's 'Gedichte,' edited by his son, Professor Max Müller, Leipzig, 1868; and ventures also to subjoin an attempt to render it into English in the metre adopted by the German poet.

BYRON.

My task is done, my song has ceased, my theme
Has died into an echo.— *Childe Harold.*

Siebenunddreissig Trauerschüsse! Und wen haben sie gemeint?
Sind es siebenunddreissig Siege, die er abgekämpft dem Feind?
Sind es siebenunddreissig Wunden, die der Held trägt auf der Brust?
Sagt, wer ist der edle Todte, der des Lebens bunte Lust
Auf den Märkten und den Gassen überhüllt mit schwärzem Flor?
Sagt, wer ist der edle Todte, den mein Vaterland verlor?

Keine Siege, keine Wunden meint des Donners dumpfer Hall,
Der von Missolunghis Mauern brüllend wogt durch Berg und Thal
Und als grause Weckerstimme rüttelt auf das starre Herz,
Das der Schlag der Trauerkunde hat betäubt mit Schreck und Schmerz;
Siebenunddreissig Jahre sind es, so die Zahl der Donner meint,
Byron, Byron, deine Jahre, welche Hellas heut beweint!
Sind's die Jahre, die du lebtest? Nein, um diese wein' ich nicht:
Ewig leben diese Jahre in des Ruhmes Sonnenlicht,
Auf des Liedes Adlerschwingen, die mit nimmer müdem Schlag
Durch die Bahn der Zeiten rauschen, rauschend grosse Seelen wach.
Nein, ich wein' um andre Jahre, Jahre, die du nicht gelebt,
Um die Jahre, die für Hellas du zu leben hast gestrebt,
Solche Jahre, Monde, Tage kündet mir des Donners Hall:
Welche Lieder, welche Kämpfe, welche Wunden, welchen Fall!
Einen Fall im Siegestaumel auf den Mauern von Byzanz,

Eine Krone dir zu Füssen, auf dem Haupt der Freiheit Kranz!
Edler Kämpfer, hast gekämpfet eines jeden Kranzes werth:
Hast gekämpfet mit des Geistes doppelschneidig scharfem Schwert,

Mit des Liedes ehrner Zunge, dass von Pol zu Pol es klang,
Mit der Sonne von dem Aufgang kreisend bis zum Niedergang
Hast gekämpfet mit dem grimmen Tiger der Tyrannenwuth,
Hast gekämpfet in Lernas Sumpfe mit der ganzen Schlangenbrut,
Die in schwarzem Moder nistet und dem Licht ist also feind,
Dass sie Gift und Galle sprudelt, wenn ein Strahl sie je bescheint;
Hast gekämpfet für die Freiheit, für die Freiheit einer Welt
Und für Hellas' junge Freiheit wie ein todesfroher Held,
Sahst in ahnenden Gesichten sie auf unsern Bergen stehn,
Als im Thal noch ihre Kinder mussten an dem Joche gehn,
Hörtest schon den Lorber rauschen von der nahen Siegeslust,
Fühltest schon in Kampfeswonne schwellen deine grosse Brust!
Und als nun die Zeit erschienen, die prophetisch du geschaut,
Bist du nicht vor ihr erschrocken; wie der Bräutigam zur Braut
Flogest du in Hellas' Arme, und sie öffnete sie weit:
'Ist Tyrtäos auferstanden? Ist verwunden nun mein Leid?
Ob die Könige der Erde grollend auf mich niedersehn,
Ihre Schranzen meiner spotten, ihre Priester mich verschmähn—
Eines Sängers Kriegesflagge seh' ich fliegen durch das Meer,
Tanzende Delphine kreisen um des Schiffes Seiten her,
Stolz erheben sich der Wogen weisse Häupter vor dem Kiel,
Und an seinen Mast gelehnet greift er in sein Saitenspiel;
Freiheit! singt er mir entgegen; Freiheit! tönt es ihm zurück;
Freiheit brennt in seinen Wangen, Freiheit blitzt aus seinem Blick.
Sei willkommen, Held der Leier! Sei willkommen, Lanzenheld!
Auf, Tyrtäos, auf, und führe meine Söhne mir ins Feld!'

Also stieg er aus dem Schiffe, warf sich nieder auf das Land,
Und die Lippen drückt' er schweigend in des Ufers weichen Sand;
Schweigend ging er durch die Scharen—gleich als ging er ganz allein—
Welche jauchzend ihm entgegenwogten bis ins Meer hinein.
Ach, es hatt' ihn wol umschauert, als er küsste diesen Strand,
Eines Todesengels Flügel, der auf unsern Wällen stand!
Und der Held hat nicht gezittert, als er diesen Boten sah;
Schärfer fasst' er ihn ins Auge: 'Meinst du mich, so bin ich da;
Eine Schlacht nur lass mich kämpfen, *eine* siegesfrohe Schlacht
Für die Freiheit der Hellenen, und in deine lange Nacht

Folg' ich deinen ersten Winke ohne Sträuben, bleicher Freund—
Habe längst der Erde Schauspiel durchgelacht und durchgeweint.'

Arger Tod, du feiger Würger, hast die Bitt' ihm nicht gewährt,
Hast ihn hinterrücks beschlichen, als er wetzt' an seinem Schwert,
Hast mit seuchenschwangerm Odem um das Haupt ihn angehaucht
Und des Busens Lebensflammen aus dem Nacken ihm gesaugt.
Und so ist er hingesunken ohne Sturz und ohne Schlag.
Hingewelkt wie eine Eiche, die des Winters Stürme brach,
Doch die eine schwüle Stunde mit Gewürmen überstreut,
Sie, des Waldes stolze Heldin, einem Blumentode weiht.
Also ist er hingesunken in des Lebens vollem Flor,
Aufgeschürzt zu neuem Laufe harrend an der Schranken Thor,
Mit dem Blick die Bahn durchmessend, mit dem Blick am Ziele schon,
Das ihm heiss entgegenwinkte mit dem grünen Siegeslohn.

Ach, er hat ihn nicht errungen! Legt ihn auf sein bleiches Haupt!
Tod, was ist dir nun gelungen? Hast den Kranz ihm nicht geraubt,
Hast ihn früher ihm gegeben, als er selbst ihn hätt' erfasst;
Und der Lorber glänzet grüner, weil sein Antlitz ist erblasst.

Siebenunddreissig Trauerschüsse, donnert, donnert durch die Welt;
Und ihr hohen Meereswogen, tragt durch euer ödes Feld
Unsrer Donner Widerhalle fort nach seinem Vaterland,
Dass den Todten *die* beweinen, die den Lebenden verbannt;
Was Britannia verschuldet hat an uns mit Rath und That,
Dieser ist's, der uns die Schulden seines Volks bezahlet hat;
Ueber seiner Bahre reichen wir dem Briten unsre Hand:
Freies Volk, schlag ein, und werde Freund und Hort von uns genannt!

Thou hast nobly fought for freedom, for the freedom of a world,
And as a death-defying Hero, Grecia's flag thou hast unfurled,
Thou, gazing on our mountains, there saw'st Freedom's vision fair,
Though in the valley hard the yoke her children yet must bear;
Already moved by victory's breath thou heard'st the laurels rustle,
Already pride of battle swelled thy great heart's every muscle.

When now the destined time drew nigh which afar thou hadst descried,
For thee it had no terrors, but as bridegroom to his bride
To Hellas' open arms thou hastened joyous as she spoke—
'Is my grief o'er? Tyrtæus risen? Has he again awoke?
Then the kings of earth may pour contempt, muttering with secret scorn,
Their priests may now deride—courtiers mock at me forlorn,
For I see the poet's banner flutt'ring gaily o'er the sea,
And dolphins dance around the ship that bringeth him to me;
The waves' white crests they proudly rear around the vessel's bows,
Leaning against the mast he stands, and tunes his lyre to rouse,—
Freedom! sings he to me loudly, Freedom! all my shores reply;
Freedom reddens in his cheek, Freedom glances from his eye;
Welcome, hero of the lyre! Welcome, champion of the right!
O come, Tyrtæus, come! lead my sons into the fight!'

Then he stepped from out the ship, threw himself upon the land,
And silently he pressed his lips upon the yellow sand;
Silent—as if he moved alone—he hurried through the crowd,
Who rushed to meet him on the shore, and low before him bowed.
But as he kissed the shore so loved, on him a shadow falls;
Death's Angel there with outspread wing, stands threatening on our walls;
Yet the hero trembled not before that messenger of woe;
Stern he gazed into his eye: 'Call'st thou me?—then be it so!
Let me only gain one victory, let me only fight one fight,
For the freedom of the Hellenes; then into thy long night
I'll fearless follow thee, pale friend! at thy first whisper low,
For life's drama I have laughed through and wept through long ago.'

Cruel Death! Assassin mean! thou didst not grant him his request,
But, creeping up behind him when his sword was in its rest,

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